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THE  
ANATOLE FRANCE  
OMNIBUS

Containing  
CRAINQUEBILLE  
THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS  
THE MERRIE TALES OF  
JACQUES TOURNEBROCHE

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**CRAINQUEBILLE**



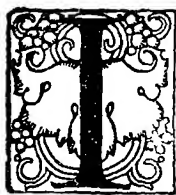
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## CRAINQUEBILLE

### I



IN every sentence pronounced by a judge in the name of the sovereign people, dwells the whole majesty of justice. The august character of that justice was brought home to Jérôme Crainquebille, costermonger, when, accused of having insulted a policeman, he appeared in the police court. Having taken his place in the dock, he beheld in the imposing sombre hall magistrates, clerks, lawyers in their robes, the usher wearing his chains, *gendarmes*, and, behind a rail, the bare heads of the silent spectators. He, himself, occupied a raised seat, as if some sinister honour were conferred on the accused by his appearance before the magistrate. At the end of the hall, between two assessors, sat the Président Bourriche. The palm-leaves of an officer of the Academy decorated his breast. Over the

tribune were a bust representing the Republic and a crucifix, as if to indicate that all laws divine and human were suspended over Crainquebille's head. Such symbols naturally inspired him with terror. Not being gifted with a philosophic mind, he did not inquire the meaning of the bust and the crucifix ; he did not ask how far Jesus and the symbolical bust harmonized in the Law Courts. Nevertheless, here was matter for reflection ; for, after all, pontifical teaching and canon law are in many points opposed to the constitution of the Republic and to the civil code. So far as we know the Decretals have not been abolished. To-day, as formerly, the Church of Christ teaches that only those powers are lawful to which it has given its sanction. Now the French Republic claims to be independent of pontifical power. Crainquebille might reasonably say :

“ Gentlemen and magistrates, in so much as President Loubet has not been anointed, the Christ, whose image is suspended over your heads, repudiates you through the voice of councils and of Popes. Either he is here to remind you of the rights of the Church, which invalidate yours, or His presence has no rational signification.”

Whereupon President Bourriche might reply :

"Prisoner Crainquebille, the kings of France have always quarrelled with the Pope. Guillaume de Nogaret was excommunicated, but for so trifling a reason he did not resign his office. The Christ of the tribune is not the Christ of Gregory VII or of Boniface VIII. He is, if you will, the Christ of the Gospels, who knew not one word of canon law, and had never heard of the holy Decretals."

Then Crainquebille might not without reason have answered :

"The Christ of the Gospels was an agitator. Moreover, he was the victim of a sentence, which for nineteen hundred years all Christian peoples have regarded as a grave judicial error. I defy you Monsieur le Président, to condemn me in His name to so much as forty-eight hours' imprisonment."

But Crainquebille did not indulge in any considerations either historical, political or social. He was wrappd in amazement. All the ceremonial, with which he was surrounded, impressed him with a very lofty idea of justice. Filled with reverence, overcome with terror, he was ready to submit to his judges in the matter of his guilt. In his own conscience he was convinced of his innocence ; but he felt how insignificant is the conscience of a costermonger in the face of the panoply of the law,



and the ministers of public prosecution. Already his lawyer had half persuaded him that he was not innocent.

A summary and hasty examination had brought out the charges under which he laboured.

## II

### CRAINQUEBILLE'S MISADVENTURE



UP and down the town went Jérôme Crainquebille, costermonger, pushing his barrow before him and crying : “ Cabbages ! Turnips ! Carrots ! ” When he had leeks he cried : “ Asparagus ! ” For leeks are the asparagus of the poor. Now it happened that on October 20, at noon, as he was going down the Rue Montmartre, there came out of her shop the shoemaker's wife, Madame Bayard. She went up to Crainquebille's barrow and scornfully taking up a bundle of leeks, she said :

“ I don't think much of your leeks. What do you want a bundle ? ”

“ Sevenpence halfpenny, mum, and the best in the market ! ”

“ Sevenpence halfpenny for three wretched leeks ? ”

And disdainfully she cast the leeks back into the barrow.

Then it was that Constable 64 came and said to Crainquebille :

“ Move on.”

Moving on was what Crainquebille had been doing from morning till evening for fifty years. Such an order seemed right to him, and perfectly in accordance with the nature of things. Quite prepared to obey, he urged his customer to take what she wanted.

“ You must give me time to choose,” she retorted sharply.

Then she felt all the bundles of leeks over again. Finally, she selected the one she thought the best, and held it clasped to her bosom as saints in church pictures hold the palm of victory.

“ I will give you sevenpence. That’s quite enough ; and I’ll have to fetch it from the shop, for I haven’t anything on me.”

Still embracing the leeks, she went back into the shop, whither she had been preceded by a customer, carrying a child.

Just at this moment Constable 64 said to Crainquebille for the second time :

“ Move on.”

“ I’m waiting for my money,” replied Crainquebille.

"And I'm not telling you to wait for your money ; I'm telling you to move on," retorted the constable grimly.

Meanwhile, the shoemaker's wife in her shop was fitting blue slippers on to a child of eighteen months, whose mother was in a hurry. And the green heads of the leeks were lying on the counter.

For the half century that he had been pushing his barrow through the streets, Crainquebille had been learning respect for authority. But now his position was a peculiar one : he was torn asunder between what was his due and what was his duty. His was not a judicial mind. He failed to understand that the possession of an individual's right in no way exonerated him from the performance of a social duty. He attached too great importance to his claim to receive sevenpence, and too little to the duty of pushing his barrow and moving on, for ever moving on. He stood still.

For the third time Constable 64 quietly and calmly ordered him to move on. Unlike Inspector Montauciel, whose habit it is to threaten constantly but never to take proceedings, Constable 64 is slow to threaten and quick to act. Such is his character. Though somewhat sly he is an excellent servant and a loyal soldier. He is as brave as a lion and as gentle

as a child. He knows naught save his official instructions.

“ Don’t you understand when I tell you to move on ? ”

To Crainquebille’s mind his reason for standing still was too weighty for him not to consider it sufficient. Wherefore, artlessly and simply he explained it :

“ Good Lord ! Don’t I tell you that I am waiting for my money.”

Constable 64 merely replied :

“ Do you want me to summons you ? If you do you have only to say so.”

At these words Crainquebille slowly shrugged his shoulders, looked sadly at the constable, and then raised his eyes to heaven, as if he would say :

“ I call God to witness ! Am I a law-breaker ? Am I one to make light of the by-laws and ordinances which regulate my ambulatory calling ? At five o’clock in the morning I was at the market. Since seven, pushing my barrow and wearing my hands to the bone, I have been crying : ‘ Cabbages ! Turnips ! Carrots ! ’ I am turned sixty. I am worn out. And you ask me whether I have raised the black flag of rebellion. You are mocking me and your joking is cruel.”

Either because he failed to notice the expression on Crainquebille's face, or because he considered it no excuse for disobedience, the constable inquired curtly and roughly whether he had been understood.

Now, just at that moment the block of traffic in the Rue Montmartre was at its worst. Carriages, drays, carts, omnibuses, trucks, jammed one against the other, seemed indissolubly welded together. From their quivering immobility proceeded shouts and oaths. Cabmen and butchers' boys grandiloquent and drawling insulted one another from a distance, and omnibus conductors, regarding Crainquebille as the cause of the block, called him "a dirty leek."

Meanwhile, on the pavement the curious were crowding round to listen to the dispute. Then the constable, finding himself the centre of attention, began to think it time to display his authority.

"Very well," he said, taking a stumpy pencil and a greasy notebook from his pocket.

Crainquebille persisted in his idea, obedient to a force within. Besides, it was now impossible for him either to move on or to draw back. The wheel of his barrow was unfortunately caught in that of a milkman's cart.

Tearing his hair beneath his cap he cried :

“ But don’t I tell you I’m waiting for my money !  
Here’s a fix ! *Misère de misère ! Bon sang de bon sang !* ”

By these words, expressive rather of despair than of rebellion, Constable 64 considered he had been insulted. And, because to his mind all insults must necessarily take the consecrated, regular, traditional, liturgical, ritual form so to speak of *Mort aux vaches*,\* thus the offender’s words were heard and understood by the constable.

“ Ah ! You said : *Mort aux vaches*. Very good. Come along.”

Stupefied with amazement and distress, Crainquebille opened his great rheumy eyes and gazed at Constable 64. With a broken voice proceeding now from the top of his head and now from the heels of his boots, he cried, with his arms folded over his blue blouse :

“ I said ‘ *Mort aux vaches* ’ ? I ? . . . Oh ! ”

The tradesmen and errand boys hailed the arrest with laughter. It gratified the taste of all crowds for violent and ignoble spectacles. But

\* It is impossible to translate this expression. As explained on p. 21, it means “down with spies,” the word spies being used to indicate the police.

there was one serious person who was pushing his way through the throng ; he was a sad-looking old man, dressed in black, wearing a high hat ; he went up to the constable and said to him in a low voice very gently and firmly :

“ You are mistaken. This man did not insult you.”

“ Mind your own business,” replied the policeman, but without threatening, for he was speaking to a man who was well dressed.

The old man insisted calmly and tenaciously. And the policeman ordered him to make his declaration to the Police Commissioner.

Meanwhile Crainquebille was explaining :

“ Then I did say ‘ *Mort aux vaches !* ’ Oh ! . . .”

As he was thus giving vent to his astonishment, Madame Bayard, the shoemaker’s wife, came to him with sevenpence in her hand. But Constable 64 already had him by the collar ; so Madame Bayard, thinking that no debt could be due to a man who was being taken to the police-station, put her sevenpence into her apron pocket.

Then, suddenly beholding his barrow confiscated, his liberty lost, a gulf opening beneath him and the sky overcast, Crainquebille murmured :

“ It can’t be helped ! ”



Before the Commissioner, the old gentleman declared that he had been hindered on his way by the block in the traffic, and so had witnessed the incident. He maintained that the policeman had not been insulted, and that he was labouring under a delusion. He gave his name and profession: Dr. David Matthieu, chief physician at the Ambroise-Paré Hospital, officer of the Legion of Honour. At another time such evidence would have been sufficient for the Commissioner. But just then men of science were regarded with suspicion in France.

Crainquebille continued under arrest. He passed the night in the lock-up. In the morning he was taken to the Police Court in the prison van.

He did not find prison either sad or humiliating. It seemed to him necessary. What struck him as he entered was the cleanliness of the walls and of the brick floor.

"Well, for a clean place, yes, it is a clean place. You might eat off the floor."

When he was left alone, he wanted to draw out his stool; but he perceived that it was fastened to the wall. He expressed his surprise aloud:

“That’s a queer idea ! Now there’s a thing I should never have thought of, I’m sure.”

Having sat down, he twiddled his thumbs and remained wrapped in amazement. The silence and the solitude overwhelmed him. The time seemed long. Anxiously he thought of his barrow, which had been confiscated with its load of cabbages, carrots, celery, dandelion and corn-salad. And he wondered, asking himself with alarm : “What have they done with my barrow ? ”

On the third day he received a visit from his lawyer, Maître Lemerle, one of the youngest members of the Paris Bar, President of a section of La Ligue de la Patrie Française.

Crainquebille endeavoured to tell him his story ; but it was not easy, for he was not accustomed to conversation. With a little help he might perhaps have succeeded. But his lawyer shook his head doubtfully at everything he said ; and, turning over his papers, muttered :

“Hm ! Hm ! I don’t find anything about all this in my brief.”

Then, in a bored tone, twirling his fair moustache he said :

“In your own interest it would be advisable, perhaps, for you to confess. Your persistence

in absolute denial seems to me extremely unwise."

And from that moment Crainquebille would have made confession if he had known what to confess.

### III

## CRAINQUEBILLE BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES



RESIDENT BOURRICHE devoted six whole minutes to the examination of Crainquebille. This examination would have been more enlightening if the accused had replied to the questions asked him. But Crainquebille was unaccustomed to discussion; and in such a company his lips were sealed by reverence and fear. So he was silent: and the President answered his own question; his replies were staggering. He concluded: "Finally, you admit having said, '*Mort aux vaches.*'"

"I said, '*Mort aux vaches!*' because the policeman said, '*Mort aux vaches!*' so then I said '*Mort aux vaches!*'"

He meant that, being overwhelmed by the most unexpected of accusations, he had in his amaze-

ment merely repeated the curious words falsely attributed to him, and which he had certainly never pronounced. He had said, "*Mort aux vaches!*" as he might have said, "I capable of insulting anyone! how could you believe it?"

President Bourriche put a different interpretation on the incident.

"Do you maintain," he said, "that the policeman was, himself, the first to utter the exclamation?"

Crainquebille gave up trying to explain. It was too difficult.

"You do not persist in your statement. You are quite right," said the President.

And he had the witness called.

Constable 64, by name Bastien Matra, swore he spoke the truth and nothing but the truth. Then he gave evidence in the following terms:

"I was on my beat on October 20, at noon, when I noticed in the Rue Montmartre a person who appeared to be a hawker, unduly blocking the traffic with his barrow opposite No. 328. Three times I intimated to him the order to move on, but he refused to comply. And when I gave him warning that I was about to charge him, he retorted by crying: '*Mort aux vaches!*' Which I took as an insult."

This evidence, delivered in a firm and moderate manner, the magistrates received with obvious approbation. The witnesses for the defence were Madame Bayard, shoemaker's wife, and Dr. David Matthieu, chief physician to the Hospital Ambroise Paré, officer of the Legion of Honour. Madame Bayard had seen nothing and heard nothing. Dr. Matthieu was in the crowd which had gathered round the policeman, who was ordering the costermonger to move on. His evidence led to a new episode in the trial.

"I witnessed the incident," he said, "I observed that the constable had made a mistake; he had not been insulted. I went up to him and called his attention to the fact. The officer insisted on arresting the costermonger, and told me to follow him to the Commissioner of Police. This I did. Before the Commissioner, I repeated my declaration.

"You may sit down," said the President. "Usher, recall witness Matra."

"Matra, when you proceeded to arrest the accused, did not Dr. Matthieu point out to you that you were mistaken?"

"That is to say, Monsieur le Président, that he insulted me."

“What did he say?”

“He said, ‘*Mort aux vaches!*’”

Uproarious laughter arose from the audience.

“You may withdraw,” said the President hurriedly.

And he warned the public that if such unseemly demonstrations occurred again he would clear the court. Meanwhile, Counsel for the defence was haughtily fluttering the sleeves of his gown, and for the moment it was thought that Crainquebille would be acquitted.

Order having being restored, Maître Lemerle rose. He opened his pleading with a eulogy of policemen: “those unassuming servants of society who, in return for a trifling salary, endure fatigue and brave incessant danger with daily heroism. They were soldiers once, and soldiers they remain; soldiers, that word expresses everything. . . .”

From this consideration Maître Lemerle went on to descant eloquently on the military virtues. He was one of those, he said, who would not allow a finger to be laid on the army, on that national army, to which he was so proud to belong.

The President bowed. Maître Lemerle happened to be lieutenant in the Reserves. He

was also nationalist candidate for Les Vieilles Haudriettes. He continued :

“ No, indeed, I do not esteem lightly the invaluable services unassumingly rendered, which the valiant people of Paris receive daily from the guardians of the peace. And had I beheld in Crainquebille, gentlemen, one who had insulted an ex-soldier, I should never have consented to represent him before you. My client is accused of having said : ‘ *Mort aux vaches !* ’ The meaning of such an expression is clear. If you consult *Le Dictionnaire de la Langue Verte* (slang) you will find : ‘ *Vachard* a sluggard, an idler, one who stretches himself out lazily like a cow instead of working. *Vache*, one who sells himself to the police ; spy.’ *Mort aux vaches* is an expression employed by certain people. But the question resolves itself into this : how did Crainquebille say it ? And, further, did he say it at all ? Permit me to doubt it, gentlemen.

“ I do not suspect Constable Matra of any evil intention. But, as we have said, his calling is arduous. He is sometimes harassed, fatigued, overdone. In such conditions he may have suffered from an aural hallucination. And, when he comes and tells you, gentlemen, that Dr. David Matthieu,



officer of the Legion of Honour, chief physician at the Ambroise-Paré Hospital, a gentleman and a prince of science, cried : '*Mort aux vaches*,' then we are forced to believe that Matra is obsessed, and if the term be not too strong, suffering from the mania of persecution.

"And even if Crainquebille did cry : '*Mort aux vaches*,' it remains to be proved whether such words on his lips can be regarded as an offence. Crainquebille is the natural child of a costermonger, depraved by years of drinking and other evil courses. Crainquebille was born alcoholic. You behold him brutalized by sixty years of poverty. Gentlemen you must conclude that he is irresponsible."

Maitre Lemerle sat down. Then President Bourriche muttered a sentence condemning Jérôme Crainquebille to pay fifty francs fine and to go to prison for a fortnight. The magistrates convicted him on the strength of the evidence given by Constable Matra.

As he was being taken down the long dark passage of the Palais, Crainquebille felt an intense desire for sympathy. He turned to the municipal guard who was his escort and called him three times :

"'Cipal ! . . . 'cipal ! . . . Eh ! 'cipal !" And he sighed :

“ If anyone had told me only a fortnight ago that this would happen ! ”

Then he reflected :

“ They speak too quickly, these gentlemen. They speak well, but they speak too quickly. You can’t make them understand you. . . . ’cipal, don’t you think they speak too quickly ? ”

But the soldier marched straight on without replying or turning his head.

Crainquebille asked him :

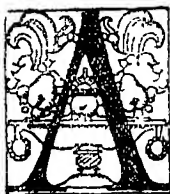
“ Why don’t you answer me ? ”

The soldier was silent. And Crainquebille said bitterly :

“ You would speak to a dog. Why not to me ? Do you never open your mouth ? Is it because your breath is foul ? ”

#### IV

### AN APOLOGY FOR PRESIDENT BOURRICHE



AFTER the sentence had been pronounced, several members of the audience and two or three lawyers left the hall. The clerk was already calling another case. Those who went out did not reflect on the Crainquebille affair, which had not greatly interested them; and they thought no more about it. Monsieur Jean Lermite, an etcher, who happened to be at the Palais, was the only one who meditated on what he had just seen and heard. Putting his arm on the shoulder of Maître Joseph Aubarrée, he said :

“President Bourriche must be congratulated on having kept his mind free from idle curiosity, and from the intellectual pride which is determined to know everything. If he had weighed one against the other the contradictory evidence of Constable

Matra and Dr. David Matthieu, the magistrate would have adopted a course leading to nothing but doubt and uncertainty. The method of examining facts in a critical spirit would be fatal to the administration of justice. If the judge were so imprudent as to follow that method, his sentences would depend on his personal sagacity, of which he has generally no very great store, and on human infirmity which is universal. Where can he find a criterion ? It cannot be denied that the historical method is absolutely incapable of providing him with the certainty he needs. In this connexion you may recall a story told of Sir Walter Raleigh.

““ One day, when Raleigh, a prisoner in the Tower of London, was working, as was his wont, at the second part of his “History of the World,” there was a scuffle under his window. He went and looked at the brawlers ; and when he returned to his work, he thought he had observed them very carefully. But on the morrow, having related the incident to one of his friends who had witnessed the affair and had even taken part in it, he was contradicted by his friend on every point. Reflecting, therefore, that if he were mistaken as to events which passed beneath his very eyes, how much greater must be the difficulty of ascertaining the

truth concerning events far distant, he threw the manuscript of his history into the fire.'

"If the judges had the same scruples as Sir Walter Raleigh, they would throw all their notes into the fire. But they have no right to do so. They would thus be flouting justice ; they would be committing a crime. We may despair of knowing, we must not despair of judging. Those who demand that sentences pronounced in Law Courts should be founded upon a methodical examination of facts, are dangerous sophists, and perfidious enemies of justice both civil and military. President Bourriche has too judicial a mind to permit his sentences to depend on reason and knowledge, the conclusions of which are eternally open to question. He founds them on dogma and moulds them by tradition, so that the authority of his sentences is equal to that of the Church's commandments. His sentences are indeed canonical. I mean that he derives them from a certain number of sacred canons. See, for example, how he classifies evidence, not according to the uncertain and deceptive qualities of appearances and of human veracity, but according to intrinsic, permanent and manifest qualities. He weighs them in the scale, using weapons of war for weights. Can anything be at once simpler

and wiser ? Irrefutable for him is the evidence of a guardian of the peace, once his humanity be abstracted, and he conceived as a registered number, and according to the categories of an ideal police. Not that Matra (Bastien), born at Cinto-Monte in Corsica, appears to him incapable of error. He never thought that Bastien Matra was gifted with any great faculty of observation, nor that he applied any secret and vigorous method to the examination of facts. In truth it is not Bastien Matra he is considering, but Constable 64. A man is fallible, he thinks. Peter and Paul may be mistaken. Descartes and Gassendi, Leibnitz and Newton, Bichat and Claude Bernard were capable of error. We may all err and at any moment. The causes of error are innumerable. The perceptions of our senses and the judgment of our minds are sources of illusion and causes of uncertainty. We dare not rely on the evidence of a single man : *Testis unus, testis nullus.* But we may have faith in a number. Bastien Matra, of Cinto-Monte, is fallible. But Constable 64, when abstraction has been made of his humanity, cannot err. He is an entity. An entity has nothing in common with a man, it is free from all that confuses, corrupts and deceives men. It is pure, unchangeable and unalloyed. Wherefore

the magistrates did not hesitate to reject the evidence of the mere man, Dr. David Matthieu, and to admit that of Constable 64, who is the pure idea, an emanation from divinity come down to the judgment bar.

“ By following such a line of argument, President Bourriche attains to a kind of infallibility, the only kind to which a magistrate may aspire. When the man who bears witness is armed with a sword, it is the sword's evidence that must be listened to, not the man's. The man is contemptible and may be wrong. The sword is not contemptible and is always right. President Bourriche has seen deeply into the spirit of laws. Society rests on force ; force must be respected as the august foundation of society. Justice is the administration of force. President Bourriche knows that Constable 64 is an integral part of the Government. The Government is immanent in each one of its officers. To slight the authority of Constable 64 is to weaken the State. To eat the leaves of an artichoke is to eat the artichoke, as Bossuet puts it in his sublime language. (*Politique tirée de l'Ecriture sainte, passim.*)

“ All the swords of the State are turned in the same direction. To oppose one to the other is to overthrow the Republic. For that reason, Crainquebille, the accused, is justly condemned to a

fortnight in prison and a fine of fifty francs, on the evidence of Constable 64. I seem to hear President Bourriche, himself, explaining the high and noble considerations which inspired his sentence. I seem to hear him saying :

“ ‘ I judged this person according to the evidence of Constable 64, because Constable 64 is the emanation of public force. And if you wish to prove my wisdom, imagine the consequences had I adopted the opposite course. You will see at once that it would have been absurd. For if my judgments were in opposition to force, they would never be executed. Notice, gentlemen, that judges are only obeyed when force is on their side. A judge without policemen would be but an idle dreamer. I should be doing myself an injury if I admitted a policeman to be in the wrong. Moreover, the very spirit of laws is in opposition to my doing so. To disarm the strong and to arm the weak would be to subvert that social order which it is my duty to preserve. Justice is the sanction of established injustice. Was justice ever seen to oppose conquerors and usurpers ? When an unlawful power arises, justice has only to recognize it and it becomes lawful. Form is everything ; and between crime and innocence there is but the thickness of a piece of stamped paper. It was for



you, Crainquebille, to be the strongest. If, after having cried : "*Mort aux vaches !*" you had declared yourself emperor, dictator, President of the Republic or even town councillor, I assure you you would not have been sentenced to pass a fortnight in prison, and to pay a fine of fifty francs. I should have acquitted you. You may be sure of that.'

"Such would have doubtless been the words of President Bourriche ; for he has a judicial mind, and he knows what a magistrate owes to society. With order and regularity he defends social principles. Justice is social. Only wrong-headed persons would make justice out to be human and reasonable. Justice is administered upon fixed rules, not in obedience to physical emotions and flashes of intelligence. Above all things do not ask justice to be just, it has no need to be just since it is justice, and I might even say that the idea of just justice can have only arisen in the brains of an anarchist. True, President Magnaud pronounces just sentences ; but if they are reversed, that is still justice.

"The true judge weighs his evidence with weights that are weapons. So it was in the Crainquebille affair, and in other more famous cases."

Thus said Monsieur Jean Lermite as he paced up and down the Salle des Pas Perdus.

Scratching the tip of his nose, Maitre Joseph Aubarrée, who knows the Palais well, replied :

“ If you want to hear what I think, I don’t believe that President Bourriche rose to so lofty a metaphysical plane. In my opinion, when he received as true the evidence of Constable 64, he merely acted according to precedent. Imitation lies at the root of most human actions. A respectable person is one who conforms to custom. People are called good when they do as others do.”

CRAINQUEBILLE SUBMITS TO THE LAWS  
OF THE REPUBLIC

HAVING been taken back to his prison, Crainquebille sat down on his chained stool, filled with astonishment and admiration. He, himself, was not quite sure whether the magistrates were mistaken. The tribunal had concealed its essential weakness beneath the majesty of form. He could not believe that he was in the right, as against magistrates whose reasons he had not understood: it was impossible for him to conceive that anything could go wrong in so elaborate a ceremony. For, unaccustomed to attending Mass or frequenting the Elysée, he had never in his life witnessed anything so grand as a police court trial. He was perfectly aware that he had never cried "*Mort aux vaches!*" That for having said it he should have been sentenced to a

fortnight's imprisonment seemed to him an august mystery, one of those articles of faith to which believers adhere without understanding them, an obscure, striking, adorable and terrible revelation.

This poor old man believed himself guilty of having mystically offended Constable 64, just as the little boy learning his first Catechism believes himself guilty of Eve's sin. His sentence had taught him that he had cried: "*Mort aux vaches!*" He must, therefore have cried "*Mort aux vaches!*" in some mysterious manner, unknown to himself. He was transported into a supernatural world. His trial was his apocalypse.

If he had no very clear idea of the offence, his idea of the penalty was still less clear. His sentence appeared to him a solemn and superior ritual, something dazzling and incomprehensible, which is not to be discussed, and for which one is neither to be praised nor pitied. If at that moment he had seen President Bourriche, with white wings and a halo round his forehead, coming down through a hole in the ceiling, he would not have been surprised at this new manifestation of judicial glory. He would have said: "This is my trial continuing!"

On the next day his lawyer visited him:

"Well, my good fellow, things aren't so bad after

all ! Don't be discouraged. A fortnight is soon over. We have not much to complain of."

"As for that, I must say the gentlemen were very kind, very polite: not a single rude word. I shouldn't have believed it. And the *cipal* was wearing white gloves. Did you notice ?"

"Everything considered, we did well to confess "

"Perhaps."

"Crainquebille, I have a piece of good news for you. A charitable person, whose interest I have elicited on your behalf, gave me fifty francs for you. The sum will be used to pay your fine."

"When will you give me the money ?"

"It will be paid into the clerk's office. You need not trouble about it."

"It does not matter. All the same I am very grateful to this person." And Crainquebille murmured meditatively: "It's something out of the common that's happening to me."

"Don't exaggerate, Crainquebille. Your case is by no means rare, far from it."

"You couldn't tell me where they've put my barrow ?"

## VI

### CRAINQUEBILLE IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC OPINION



AFTER his discharge from prison, Crainquebille trundled his barrow along the Rue Montmartre, crying: "Cabbages, turnips, carrots!" He was neither ashamed nor proud of his adventure. The memory of it was not painful. He classed it in his mind with dreams, travels and plays. But, above all things, he was glad to be walking in the mud, along the paved streets, and to see overhead the rainy sky as dirty as the gutter, the dear sky of the town. At every corner he stopped to have a drink; then, gay and unconstrained, spitting in his hands in order to moisten his horny palms, he would seize the shafts and push on his barrow. Meanwhile a flight of sparrows, as poor and as early as he, seeking their livelihood in the road, flew off at the sound of his familiar cry:

“Cabbages, turnips, carrots!” An old house wife, who had come up, said to him as she felt his celery:

“What’s happened to you, Père Crainquebille? We haven’t seen you for three weeks. Have you been ill? You look rather pale.”

“I’ll tell you, M’ame Mailloche, I’ve been doing the gentleman.”

Nothing in his life changed, except that he went oftener to the pub, because he had an idea it was a holiday and that he had made the acquaintance of charitable folk. He returned to his garret rather gay. Stretched on his mattress he drew over him the sacks borrowed from the chestnut-seller at the corner which served him as blankets and he pondered: “Well, prison is not so bad; one has everything one wants there. But all the same one is better at home.”

His contentment did not last long. He soon perceived that his customers looked at him askance.

“Fine celery, M’ame Cointreau!

“I don’t want anything.”

“What! nothing! do you live on air then?”

And M’ame Cointreau without deigning to reply returned to the large bakery of which she was the mistress. The shopkeepers and caretakers, who had once flocked round his barrow all green and bloom-

ing, now turned away from him. Having reached the shoemaker's, at the sign of l'Ange Gardien, the place where his adventures with justice had begun, he called :

“ M'ame Bayard, M'ame Bayard, you owe me sevenpence halfpenny from last time.”

But M'ame Bayard, who was sitting at her counter, did not deign to turn her head.

The whole of the Rue Montmartre was aware that Père Crainquebille had been in prison, and the whole of the Rue Montmartre gave up his acquaintance. The rumour of his conviction had reached the Faubourg and the noisy corner of the Rue Richer. There, about noon, he perceived Madame Laure, a kind and faithful customer, leaning over the barrow of another costermonger, young Martin. She was feeling a large cabbage. Her hair shone in the sunlight like masses of golden threads loosely twisted. And young Martin, a nobody, a good-for-nothing, was protesting with his hand on his heart that there were no finer vegetables than his. At this sight Crainquebille's heart was rent. He pushed his barrow up to young Martin's, and in a plaintive broken voice said to Madame Laure: “ It's not fair of you to forsake me.”

As Madame Laure herself admitted, she was no



duchess. It was not in society that she had acquired her ideas of the prison van and the police-station. But can one not be honest in every station in life ? Every one has his self respect ; and one does not like to deal with a man who has just come out of prison. So the only notice she took of Crainquebille was to give him a look of disgust. And the old costermonger resenting the affront shouted :

“ Dirty wench, go along with you.”

Madame Laure let fall her cabbage and cried :

“ Eh ! Be off with you, you bad penny. You come out of prison and then insult folk ! ”

If Crainquebille had had any self-control he would never have reproached Madame Laure with her calling. He knew only too well that one is not master of one's fate, that one cannot always choose one's occupation, and that good people may be found everywhere. He was accustomed discreetly to ignore her customers' business with her ; and he despised no one. But he was beside himself. Three times he called Madame Laure drunkard, wench, harridan. A group of idlers gathered round Madame Laure and Crainquebille. They exchanged a few more insults as serious as the first ; and they would soon have exhausted their vocabulary, if a policeman had not suddenly appeared, and at once, by his

silence and immobility, rendered them as silent and as motionless as himself. They separated. But this scene put the finishing touch to the discrediting of Crainquebille in the eyes of the Faubourg Montmartre and the Rue Richer.

## VII

### RESULTS



THE old man went along mumbling .

“ For certain she’s a hussy, and none more of a hussy than she.”

But at the bottom of his heart that was not the reproach he brought against her. He did not scorn her for being what she was. Rather he esteemed her for it, knowing her to be frugal and orderly. Once they had liked to talk together. She used to tell him of her parents who lived in the country. And they had both resolved to have a little garden and keep poultry. She was a good customer. And then to see her buying cabbages from young Martin, a dirty, good-for-nothing wretch ; it cut him to the heart ; and when she pretended to despise him, that put his back up, and then . . . !

But she, alas ! was not the only one who shunned

him as if he had the plague. Every one avoided him. Just like Madame Laure, Madame Cointreau the baker, Madame Bayard of l'Ange Gardien scorned and repulsed him. Why ! the whole of society refused to have anything to do with him.

So because one had been put away for a fortnight one was not good enough even to sell leeks ! Was it just ? Was it reasonable to make a decent chap die of starvation because he had got into difficulties with a copper ? If he was not to be allowed to sell vegetables then it was all over with him. Like a badly doctored wine he turned sour. After having had words with Madame Laure, he now had them with every one. For a mere nothing he would tell his customers what he thought of them and in no ambiguous terms, I assure you. If they felt his wares too long he would call them to their faces chatterer, soft head. Likewise at the wine-shop he bawled at his comrades. His friend, the chestnut-seller, no longer recognized him ; old Père Crainquebille, he said, had turned into a regular porcupine. It cannot be denied : he was becoming rude, disagreeable, evil-mouthed, loquacious. The truth of the matter was that he was discovering the imperfections of society ; but he had not the facilities of a Professor of Moral and Political Science for the

expression of his ideas concerning the vices of the system and the reforms necessary ; and his thoughts evolved devoid of order and moderation.

Misfortune was rendering him unjust. He was taking his revenge on those who did not wish him ill and sometimes on those who were weaker than he. One day he boxed Alphonse, the wine-seller's little boy, on the ear, because he had asked him what it was like to be sent away. Crainquebille struck him and said :

" Dirty brat ! it's your father who ought to be sent away instead of growing rich by selling poison."

A deed and a speech which did him no honour ; for, as the chestnut-seller justly remarked, one ought not to strike a child, neither should one reproach him with a father whom he has not chosen.

Crainquebille began to drink. The less money he earned the more brandy he drank. Formerly frugal and sober he himself marvelled at the change.

" I never used to be a waster," he said. " I suppose one doesn't improve as one grows old."

Sometimes he severely blamed himself for his misconduct and his laziness :

" Crainquebille, old chap, you ain't good for anything but liftin' your glass."

Sometimes he deceived himself and made out that he needed the drink.

“I must have it now and then ; I must have a drop to strengthen me and cheer me up. It seems as if I had a fire in my inside ; and there’s nothing like the drink for quenching it.”

It often happened that he missed the auction in the morning and so had to provide himself with damaged fruit and vegetables on credit. One day, feeling tired and discouraged, he left his barrow in its shed, and spent the livelong day hanging round the stall of Madame Rose, the tripe-seller, or lounging in and out of the wine-shops near the market. In the evening, sitting on a basket, he meditated and became conscious of his deterioration. He recalled the strength of his early years : the achievements of former days, the arduous labours and the glad evenings : those days quickly passing, all alike and fully occupied ; the pacing in the darkness up and down the Market pavement, waiting for the early auction ; the vegetables carried in armfuls and artistically arranged in the barrow ; the piping hot black coffee of Mère Théodore swallowed standing, and at one gulp ; the shafts grasped vigorously ; and then the loud cry, piercing as cock crow, rending the morning air as he passed through the crowded

streets. All that innocent, rough life of the human pack-horse came before him. For half a century, on his travelling stall, he had borne to townsfolk worn with care and vigil the fresh harvest of kitchen gardens. Shaking his head he sighed :

“No ! I’m not what I was. I’m done for. The pitcher goes so often to the well that at last it comes home broken. And then I’ve never been the same since my affair with the magistrates. No, I’m not the man I was.”

In short he was demoralized. And when a man reaches that condition he might as well be on the ground and unable to rise. All the passers-by tread him under foot.

## VIII

### THE FINAL RESULT



POVERTY came, black poverty. The old costermonger who used to come back from the Faubourg Montmartre with a bag full of five-franc pieces, had not a single coin now. Winter came. Driven out of his garret, he slept under the carts in a shed. It had been raining for days, the gutters were overflowing, and the shed was flooded.

Crouching in his barrow, over the pestilent water, in the company of spiders, rats and half-starved cats, he was meditating in the gloom. Having eaten nothing all day and no longer having the chestnut-seller's sacks for a covering, he recalled the fortnight when the Government had provided him with food and clothing. He envied the prisoners' fate. They suffer neither cold nor hunger, and an idea occurred to him :



“ Since I know the trick why don’t I use it ? ”

He rose and went out into the street. It was a little past eleven. The night was dark and chill. A drizzling mist was falling, colder and more penetrating than rain. The few passers-by crept along under cover of the houses.

Crainquebille went past the Church of Saint-Eustache and turned into the Rue Montmartre. It was deserted. A guardian of the peace stood on the pavement, by the apse of the church. He was under a gas-lamp, and all around fell a fine rain looking reddish in the gaslight. It fell on to the policeman’s hood. He looked chilled to the bone ; but, either because he preferred to be in the light or because he was tired of walking he stayed under the lamp, and perhaps it seemed to him a friend, a companion. In the loneliness of the night the flickering flame was his only entertainment. In his immobility he appeared hardly human. The reflection of his boots on the wet pavement, which looked like a lake, prolonged him downwards and gave him from a distance the air of some amphibious monster half out of water. Observed more closely he had at once a monkish and a military appearance. The coarse features of his countenance, magnified under the shadow of his hood, were sad and placid. He wore a thick mous-

tache, short and grey. He was an old copper, a man of some two-score years. Crainquebille went up to him softly, and in a weak hesitating voice, said :  
“ *Mort aux vaches !* ”

Then he awaited the result of those sacred words. But nothing came of them. The constable remained motionless and silent, with his arms folded under his short cloak. His eyes were wide open ; they glistened in the darkness and regarded Crainquebille with sadness, vigilance and scorn.

Crainquebille, astonished, but still resolute, muttered :

“ *Mort aux vaches !* I tell you.”

There was a long silence in the chill darkness and the falling of the fine penetrating rain. At last the constable spoke :

“ Such things are not said. . . . For sure and for certain they are not said. At your age you ought to know better. Pass on.”

“ Why don’t you arrest me ? ” asked Crainquebille.

The constable shook his head beneath his dripping hood :

“ If we were to take up all the addle-pates who say what they oughtn’t to, we should have our work cut out ! . . . And what would be the use of it ? ”

Overcome by such magnanimous disdain, Crainquebille remained for some time stolid and silent, with his feet in the gutter. Before going, he tried to explain :

“ I didn’t mean to say : *Mort aux vaches!* to you. It was not for you more than for another. It was only an idea.”

The constable replied sternly but kindly :

“ Whether an idea or anything else it ought not to be said, because when a man does his duty and endures much, he ought not to be insulted with idle words. . . . I tell you again to pass on.”

Crainquebille, with head bent and arms hanging limp, plunged into the rain and the darkness.

PUTOIS

TO GEORGES BRANDÈS

# PUTOIS

## I



WHEN we were children, our tiny garden, which you could go from end to end of in twenty strides, seemed to us a vast universe, made up of joys and terrors," said Monsieur Bergeret.

"Do you remember Putois, Lucien?" asked Zoé, smiling as was her wont, with lips compressed and her nose over her needlework.

"Do I remember Putois! . . . Why, of all the figures which passed before my childhood's eyes, that of Putois remains the clearest in my memory. Not a single feature of his face or of his character have I forgotten. He had a long head. . . ."

"A low forehead," added Mademoiselle Zoé

Then antiphonally, in a monotonous voice, with mock gravity, the brother and sister recited the following points of a kind of police description :

"A low forehead."

"Wall-eyed."

"Furtive looking."

"A crow's-foot on his temple."

"High cheek-bones, red and shiny."

"His ears were ragged."

"His face was blank and expressionless."

"It was only by his hands, which were constantly moving, that you divined his thoughts."

"Thin, rather bent, weak in appearance."

"In reality of unusual strength."

"He could easily bend a five-franc piece between his thumb and forefinger."

"His thumb was huge."

"He spoke with a drawl."

"His tone was unctuous."

Suddenly Monsieur Bergeret cried eagerly :

"Zoé! We have forgotten his yellow hair and his scant beard. We must begin again."

Pauline had been listening with astonishment to this strange recital. She asked her father and her aunt how they had come to learn this prose passage by heart, and why they recited it like a Litany.

Monsieur Bergeret replied gravely :

"Pauline, what you have just heard is the sacred text, I may say the liturgy of the Bergeret family.

It is right that it should be transmitted to you in order that it may not perish with your aunt and me. Your grandfather, my child, your grandfather, Eloi Bergeret, who was not one to be amused with trifles, set a high value on this passage, principally on account of its origin. He entitled it 'The Anatomy of Putois.' And he was accustomed to say that in certain respects he set the anatomy of Putois above the anatomy of Quaresmeprenant. 'If the description written by Xenomanes,' he said, 'is more learned and richer in rare and precious terms, the description of Putois greatly excels it in the lucidity of its ideas and the clearness of its style.' Such was his opinion, for in those days Doctor Ledouble, of Tours, had not yet expounded chapters thirty, thirty-one and thirty-two of the fourth book of Rabelais."

"I can't understand you," said Pauline.

"It is because you don't know Putois, my daughter. You must learn that, in the childhood of your father and your aunt Zoé, there was no more familiar figure than Putois. In the home of your grandfather Bergeret, Putois was a household word. We all, in turn, believed that we had seen him."

"But who was Putois?" asked Pauline.

Instead of replying her father began to laugh,



and Mademoiselle Bergeret also laughed, though her lips were closed.

Pauline looked first at one then at the other. It seemed to her odd that her aunt should laugh so heartily, and odder still that she should laugh at the same thing as her brother ; for strange to say the minds of the brother and sister moved in different grooves.

“ Tell me who Putois was, papa. Since you want me to know, tell me.”

“ Putois, my child, was a gardener. The son of honest farmers of Artois, he had set up as a nurseryman at Saint-Omer. But he was unable to please his customers and failed in business. He gave up his nursery and went out to work by the day. His employers were not always satisfied.”

At these words, Mademoiselle Bergeret, still laughing, remarked :

“ You remember, Lucien, when father couldn't find his ink-pot, his pens, his sealing-wax or his scissors on his desk, how he used to say : ‘ I think Putois must have been here ’.”

“ Ah ! ” said Monsieur Bergeret, “ Putois had not a good reputation.”

“ Is that all ? ” asked Pauline.

“ No, my child, it is not all. There was something

odd about Putois ; we knew him, he was familiar to us and yet . . . . "

. . . . " He did not exist," said Zoé.

Monsieur Bergeret looked reproachfully at her.

" What a thing to say, Zoé ! Why thus break the charm ? Putois did not exist ! Dare you say so, Zoé ? Can you maintain it ? Before affirming that Putois did not exist, that Putois never was, you should consider the conditions of being and the modes of existence. Putois existed, sister. But it is true that his was a peculiar existence."

" I understand less and less," said Pauline, growing discouraged.

" The truth will dawn upon you directly, child. Know that Putois was born in the fullness of age. I was still a child ; your aunt was a little girl. We lived in a small house, in a suburb of Saint-Omer. Our parents led a quiet retired life, until they were discovered by an old lady of Saint-Omer, Madame Cornouiller, who lived in her manor of Monplaisir, some twelve miles from the town, and who turned out to be my mother's great aunt. She took advantage of the privilege of friendship, to insist on our father and mother coming to dine with her at Monplaisir every Sunday. There they were bored to death. But the old lady said it was right for

relatives to dine together on Sundays, and that only ill-bred persons neglected the observance of this ancient custom. Our father was miserable. His sufferings were pitiful to behold. But Madame Cornouiller did not see them. She saw nothing. My mother bore it better. She suffered as much as my father, and perhaps more, but she contrived to smile."

"Women are made to suffer," said Zoé.

"Every living creature in the world is born to suffer, Zoé. It was in vain that our parents refused these terrible invitations; Madame Cornouiller's carriage came to fetch them every Sunday afternoon. They were bound to go to Monplaisir; it was an obligation which they could not possibly avoid. It was an established order which only open rebellion could disturb. At length my father revolted, and swore he would not accept another of Madame Cornouiller's invitations. To my mother he left the task of finding decent pretexts and varying reasons for their repeated refusals; it was a task for which she was ill fitted; for she was incapable of dissimulation."

"Say rather, Lucien, that she was not willing to dissimulate. Had she wished she could have fibbed like anyone else."

"It is true that when she had good reasons she preferred giving them to inventing bad ones. You remember, sister, that one day she said at table : 'Fortunately Zoé has whooping-cough : so we shall not have to go to Monplaisir for a long time'."

"Yes, that did happen," said Zoé.

"You recovered, Zoé. And one day Madame Cornouiller came and said to our mother : 'My dear, I am counting on you and your husband coming to dine at Monplaisir on Sunday.' Our mother had been expressly enjoined by her husband to give Madame Cornouiller some plausible pretext for refusing. In her extremity the only excuse she could think of was absolutely devoid of probability : 'I am extremely sorry, madame, but it will be impossible. On Sunday I expect the gardener.'"

"At these words Madame Cornouiller looked through the glazed door of the drawing-room at the wilderness of a little garden, where the spindle-trees and the lilacs looked as if they never had and never would make the acquaintance of a pruning-hook. 'You are expecting the gardener ! What for ? To work in your garden !'

"Then, our mother, having involuntarily cast eyes on the patch of rough grass and half-wild plants,

which she had just called a garden, realized with alarm that her excuse must appear a mere invention. 'Why couldn't this man come on Monday or Tuesday to work in your . . . garden ? Either of these days would be better. It is wrong to work on Sunday. Is he occupied during the week ?'

"I have often noticed that the most impudent and the most absurd reasons meet with the least resistance ; they disconcert the opponent. Madame Cornouiller insisted less than might have been expected of a person so disinclined to give in. Rising from her chair she asked : 'What is your gardener's name, dear ?'

" 'Putois,' replied our mother promptly.

"Putois had a name. Henceforth he existed. Madame Cornouiller went off mumbling : 'Putois ! I seem to know that name. Putois ? Putois ! Why, yes, I know him well enough. But I can't recall him. Where does he live ? He goes out to work by the day. When people want him, they send for him to some house where he is working. Ah ! Just as I thought ; he is a loafer, a vagabond . . . a good-for-nothing. You should beware of him, my dear.'

"Henceforth Putois had a character."

## II



MONSIEUR GOUBIN and Monsieur Jean Marteau came in. Monsieur Bergeret told them the subject of the conversation :

"We were talking of the man whom my mother one day caused to exist, and created gardener at Saint-Omer. She gave him a name. Henceforth he acted."

"I beg you pardon, sir?" said Monsieur Goubin, wiping his eye-glasses. "Do you mind saying that over again?"

"Willingly," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "There was no gardener. The gardener did not exist. My mother said: 'I expect the gardener!' Straightway the gardener existed—and acted."

"But, Professor," inquired Monsieur Goubin, "how can he have acted if he did not exist?"

"In a manner, he did exist," replied Monsieur Bergeret.

"You mean he existed in imagination," scornfully retorted Monsieur Goubin.

“And is not imaginary existence, existence ?” exclaimed the Professor. “Are not mythical personages capable of influencing men ? Think of mythology, Monsieur Goubin, and you will perceive that it is not the real characters, but rather the imaginary ones that exercise the profoundest and the most durable influence over our minds. In all times and in all lands, beings who were no more real than Putois, have inspired nations with love and hatred, with terror and hope, they have counselled crimes, they have received offerings, they have moulded manners and laws. Monsieur Goubin, think on the mythology of the ages. Putois is a mythological personage, obscure, I admit, and of the humblest order. The rude satyr, who used to sit at table with our northern peasants, was deemed worthy to figure in one of Jordaëns’ pictures, and in a fable of La Fontaine. The hairy son of Sycorax was introduced into the sublime world of Shakespeare. Putois, less fortunate, will be for ever scorned by poets and artists. He is lacking in grandeur and mystery ; he has no distinction, no character. He is the offspring of too rational a mind ; he was conceived by persons who knew how to read and write, who lacked the enchanting imagination which gives birth to fables. Gentlemen, I

think what I have said is enough to reveal to you the true nature of Putois."

"I understand it," said Monsieur Goubin.

Then Monsieur Bergeret continued :

"Putois existed. I maintain it. He was. Consider, gentlemen, and you will conclude that the condition of being in no way implies matter ; it signifies only the connexion between attribute and subject, it expresses merely a relation."

"Doubtless," said Jean Marteau, "but to be without attributes is to be practically nothing. Some one said long ago : 'I am that I am.' Pardon my bad memory ; but one can't recollect everything. Whoever it was who spoke thus committed a great imprudence. By those thoughtless words he implied that he was devoid of attributes and without relation, wherefore he asserted his own non-existence and rashly suppressed himself. I wager that he has never been heard of since."

"Then your wager is lost," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "He corrected the bad effect of those egotistical words by applying to himself a whole string of adjectives. He has been greatly talked of, but generally without much sense."

"I don't understand," said Monsieur Goubin.

"That does not matter," replied Jean Marteau.



And he requested Monsieur Bergeret to tell them about Putois.

"It is very kind of you to ask me," said the Professor. "Putois was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, at Saint-Omer. It would have been better for him had he been born some centuries earlier, in the Forest of Arden or in the Wood of Broceliande. He would then have been an evil spirit of extraordinary cleverness."

"A cup of tea, Monsieur Goubin," said Pauline.

"Was Putois an evil spirit then ?" inquired Jean Marteau.

"He was evil," replied Monsieur Bergeret ; "in a certain way, and yet not absolutely evil. He was like those devils who are said to be very wicked, but in whom, when one comes to know them, one discovers good qualities. I am disposed to think that justice has not been done to Putois. Madame Cornouiller was prejudiced against him ; she immediately suspected him of being a loafer, a drunkard, a thief. Then, reflecting that since he was employed by my mother, who was not rich, he could not ask for high pay, she wondered whether it might not be to her advantage to engage him in the place of her own gardener, who had a better reputation, but also, alas ! more requirements. It would soon be the

season for trimming the yew-trees. She thought that if Madame Eloi Bergeret, who was poor, paid Putois little, she who was rich might give him still less, since it is the custom for the rich to pay less than the poor. And already in her mind's eye she beheld her yew-trees cut into walls, spheres and pyramids, all for but a trifling outlay. 'I should look after Putois,' she said to herself, 'and see that he did not loaf and thief. I risk nothing and save a good deal. These casual labourers sometimes do better than skilled workmen.' She resolved to make the experiment, she said to my mother: 'Send Putois to me, my dear. I will give him work at Monplaisir.' My mother promised. She would willingly have done it. But really it was impossible. Madame Cornouiller expected Putois at Monplaisir and expected him in vain. She was a persistent person, and, once having made a resolve, she was determined to carry it out. When she saw my mother, she complained of having heard nothing of Putois. 'Did you not tell him, my dear, that I was expecting him?' 'Yes, but he is so strange, so erratic . . . 'Oh! I know that sort of person. I know your Putois through and through. But no workman can be so mad as to refuse to come to work at Monplaisir. My house is well known, I should think. Putois will

come for my instructions, and quickly, my dear. Only tell me where he lives ; and I will go and find him myself.' My mother replied that she did not know where Putois lived, he was not known to have a home, he was without an address. 'I have not seen him again, Madame. He seems to have gone into hiding.' She could not have come nearer the truth. And yet Madame Cornouiller listened to her with mistrust. She suspected her of beguiling Putois and keeping him out of sight for fear of losing him or rendering him more exacting. And she mentally pronounced her overselfish. Many a judgment generally accepted and ratified by history has no better foundation."

"That is quite true," said Pauline.

"What is true ?" asked Zoé, who was half asleep.

"That the judgments of history are often false. I remember, papa, that you said one day : 'It was very naive of Madame Roland to appeal to an impartial posterity, and not to see that if her contemporaries were malevolent, those who came after them would be equally so.'"

"Pauline," inquired Mademoiselle Zoé, sternly, what has that to do with the story of Putois ? "

"A great deal, aunt."

“ I don’t see it.”

Monsieur Bergeret, who did not object to digressions, replied to his daughter :

“ If every injustice were ultimately repaired in this world, it would never have been necessary to invent another for the purpose. How can posterity judge the dead justly ? Into the shades whither they pass can they be pursued, can they there be questioned ? As soon as it is possible to regard them justly they are forgotten. But is it possible ever to be just ? What is justice ? At any rate, in the end, Madame Cornouiller was obliged to admit that my mother was not deceiving her, and that Putois was not to be found.

“ Nevertheless, she did not give up looking for him. Of all her relations, friends, neighbours, servants and tradesmen she inquired whether they knew Putois. Only two or three replied that they had never heard of him. The majority thought they had seen him. ‘ I have heard the name,’ said the cook, ‘ but I can’t put a face to it.’ ‘ Putois ! Why ! I know him very well,’ said the road surveyor, scratching his ear. ‘ But I couldn’t exactly point him out to you.’ The most precise information came from Monsieur Blaise, the registrar, who declared that he had employed Putois to chop wood in his yard,

from the 19th until the 23rd of October, in the year of the comet.

“ One morning, Madame Cornouiller rushed panting into my father’s study : ‘ I have just seen Putois,’ she exclaimed. ‘ Ah ! Yes. I’ve just seen him. Do I think so ? But I am sure. He was creeping along by Monsieur Tenchant’s wall. He turned into the Rue des Abbesses ; he was walking quickly. Then I lost him. Was it really he ? There’s no doubt of it. A man about fifty, thin, bent, looking like a loafer, wearing a dirty blouse.’ Such is indeed Putois’ description,’ said my father. ‘ Ah ! I told you so ! Besides, I called him. I cried : Putois ! and he turned round. That is what detectives do when they want to make sure of the identity of a criminal they are in search of. Didn’t I tell you it was he ! . . . I managed to get on his track, your Putois. Well ! he is very evil looking. And it was extremely imprudent of you and your wife to employ him. I can read character ; and though I only saw his back, I would swear that he is a thief, and perhaps a murderer. His ears are ragged ; and that is an infallible sign.’ ‘ Ah ! you noticed that his ears were ragged ? ’ ‘ Nothing escapes me. My dear Monsieur Bergeret, if you don’t want to be murdered with your wife and children, don’t let Putois come into

your house again. Take my advice and have all your locks changed.'

"Now a few days later it happened that Madame Cornouiller had three melons stolen from her kitchen garden. As the thief was not discovered, she suspected Putois. The *gendarmes* were summoned to Monplaisir, and their statements confirmed Madame Cornouiller's suspicions. Just then gangs of thieves were prowling around the gardens of the countryside. But this time the theft seemed to have been committed by a single person, and with extraordinary skill. He had not damaged anything, and had left no footprint on the moist ground. The delinquent could be none other than Putois. Such was the opinion of the police sergeant; who had long known all about Putois, and was making every effort to put his hand on the fellow.

"In the *Journal de Saint-Omer* appeared an article on the three melons of Madame Cornouiller. It contained a description of Putois, according to information obtained in the town. 'His forehead is low,' said the newspaper, 'he is wall-eyed; his look is shifty, he has a crow's foot on the temple, high cheek-bones red and shiny. His ears are ragged. Thin, slightly bent, weak in appearance, in reality he is extraordinarily strong: he can easily bend a

five-franc piece between his thumb and fore-finger.

“ ‘There were good reasons,’ said the newspaper, ‘for attributing to him a long series of robberies perpetrated with marvellous skill.’

“ Putois was the talk of the town. One day it was said that he had been arrested and committed to prison. But it was soon discovered that the man who had been taken for Putois was a pedlar named Rigobert. As nothing could be proved against him, he was discharged after a fortnight’s precautionary detention. And still Putois could not be found. Madame Cornouiller fell a victim to another robbery still more audacious than the first. Three silver teaspoons were stolen from her sideboard.

“ She recognized the hand of Putois, had a chain put on her bedroom door and lay awake at night.”

### III



ABOUT ten o'clock, when Pauline had gone to bed, Mademoiselle Bergeret said to her brother :

“ Don't forget to tell how Putois seduced Madame Cornouiller's cook.”

“ I was just thinking of it, sister,” replied her brother. “ To omit that incident would be to omit the best part of the story. But we must come to it in its proper place. The police made a careful search for Putois but they did not find him. When it was known that he could not be found, every one made it a point of honour to discover him ; and the malicious succeeded. As there were not a few malicious folk at Saint-Omer and in the neighbourhood, Putois was observed at one and the same time in street, field and wood. Thus, another trait was added to his character. To him was attributed that gift of ubiquity which is possessed by so many popular heroes. A being capable of travelling long



distances in a moment, and of appearing suddenly in the place where he is least expected, is naturally alarming. Putois was the terror of Saint-Omer. Madame Cornouiller, convinced that Putois had robbed her of three melons and three teaspoons, barricaded herself at Monplaisir and lived in perpetual fear. Bars, bolts and locks were powerless to reassure her. Putois was for her a terribly subtle creature, who could pass through closed doors. A domestic event redoubled her alarm. Her cook was seduced ; and a time came when she could conceal her fault no longer. But she obstinately refused to indicate her betrayer.

“ Her name was Gudule,” said Mademoiselle Zoé.

“ Her name was Gudule ; and she was thought to be protected against the perils of love by a long and forked beard. A beard, which suddenly appeared on the chin of that saintly royal maiden venerated at Prague, protected her virginity. A beard, which was no longer young, sufficed not to protect the virtue of Gudule. Madame Cornouiller urged Gudule to utter the name of the man who had betrayed her and then abandoned her to distress. Gudule burst into tears, but refused to speak. Threats and entreaties were alike useless. Madame

Cornouiller made a long and minute inquiry. She diplomatically questioned her neighbours—both men and women—the tradesmen, the gardener, the road surveyor, the *gendarmes*; nothing put her on the track of the culprit. Again she endeavoured to extract a full confession from Gudule. ‘In your own interest, Gudule, tell me who it is.’ Gudule remained silent. Suddenly Madame Cornouiller had a flash of enlightenment: ‘It is Putois!’ The cook wept and said nothing. ‘It is Putois! Why did I not guess it before? It is Putois! You unhappy girl! Oh you poor, unhappy girl!’

“Henceforth Madame Cornouiller was persuaded that Putois was the father of her cook’s child. Every one at Saint-Omer, from the President of the Tribunal to the lamplighter’s mongrel dog, knew Gudule and her basket. The news that Putois had seduced Gudule filled the town with laughter, astonishment and admiration. Putois was hailed as an irresistible lady-killer and the lover of the eleven thousand virgins. On these slight grounds there was ascribed to him the paternity of five or six other children born that year, who, considering the happiness that awaited them and the joy they brought to their mothers, would have done just as well not to put in an appearance. Among others were included the

servant of Monsieur Maréchal, who kept the general shop with the sign of 'Le Rendezvous des Pêcheurs,' a baker's errand girl, and the little cripple of the Pont-Biquet, who had all fallen victims to Putois' charms. 'The monster !' cried the gossips.

"Thus Putois, invisible satyr, threatened with woes irretrievable all the maidens of a town, wherein, according to the oldest inhabitants, virgins had from time immemorial lived free from danger.

"Though celebrated thus throughout the city and its neighbourhood, he continued in a subtle manner to be associated especially with our home. He passed by our door, and it was believed that from time to time he climbed over our garden wall. He was never seen face to face. But we were constantly recognizing his shadow, his voice, his footprints. More than once, in the twilight, we thought we saw his back at the bend of the road. My sister and I were changing our opinions of him. He remained wicked and malevolent, but he was becoming child-like and simple. He was growing less real, and, if I may say so, more poetical. He was about to be included in the naïve cycle of children's fairy tales. He was turning into Croquemitaine, into Père Fouettard, into the dustman who shuts little children's eyes at night. He was not that sprite who by night

entangles the colt's tail in the stable. Not so rustic or so charming, yet he was just as frankly mischievous; he used to draw ink moustaches on my sister's dolls. In our beds we used to hear him before we went to sleep: he was caterwauling on the roofs with the cats, he was barking with the dogs; he was groaning in the mill-hopper; he was mimicking the songs of belated drunkards in the street.

“What rendered Putois present and familiar to us, what interested us in him was that his memory was associated with all the objects that surrounded us. Zoé's dolls, my exercise-books, the pages of which he had so often blotted and crumpled, the garden wall over which we had seen his red eyes gleam in the shadow, the blue flower-pot one winter's night cracked by him if it were not by the frost; trees, streets, benches, everything reminded us of Putois, our Putois, the children's Putois, a being local and mythical. In grace and in poetry he fell far short of the most awkward wild man of the woods, of the uncouthest Sicilian or Thessalian faun. But he was a demi-god all the same.

“To our father Putois' character appeared very differently, it was symbolical and had a philosophical signification. Our father had a vast pity for humanity. He did not think men very reasonable.

Their errors, when they were not cruel, entertained and amused him. The belief in Putois interested him as a compendium and abridgment of all the beliefs of humanity. Our father was ironical and sarcastic ; he spoke of Putois as if he were an actual being. He was sometimes so persistent, and described each detail with such precision, that our mother was quite astonished. ‘ Anyone would say that you are serious, my love, she would say frankly, and yet you know perfectly . . . .’ He replied gravely ‘ The whole of Saint-Omer believes in the existence of Putois. Could I be a good citizen and deny it ? One must think well before suppressing an article of universal belief.’

“ Only very clear-headed persons are troubled by such scruples. At heart my father was a follower of Gassendi. He compromised between his individual views and those of the public : with the Saint-Omerites he believed in the existence of Putois, but he did not admit his direct intervention in the theft of the melons and the seduction of the cook. In short, like a good citizen he professed his faith in the existence of Putois, and he dispensed with Putois when explaining the events which happened in the town. Wherefore, in this case as in all others, he proved himself a good man and a thoughtful.

“As for our mother, she felt herself in a way responsible for the birth of Putois, and she was right. For in reality Putois was born of our mother’s taradiddle, as Caliban was born of a poet’s invention. The two crimes, of course, differed greatly in magnitude, and my mother’s guilt was not so great as Shakespeare’s. Nevertheless, she was alarmed and dismayed at seeing so tiny a falsehood grow indefinitely, and so trifling a deception meet with a success so prodigious that it stopped nowhere, spread throughout the whole town, and threatened to spread throughout the whole world. One day she grew pale, believing that she was about to see her fib rise in person before her. On that day, her servant, who was new to the house and neighbourhood, came and told her that a man was asking for her. He wanted he said, to speak to Madame. ‘What kind of a man is he?’ ‘A man in a blouse. He looked like a country labourer.’ ‘Did he give his name?’ ‘Yes, Madame.’ ‘Well, what is it?’ ‘Putois.’ ‘Did he tell you that that was his name?’ ‘Putois, yes Madame.’ ‘And he is here?’ ‘Yes, Madame. He is waiting in the kitchen.’ ‘You have seen him?’ ‘Yes, Madame.’ ‘What does he want?’ ‘He did not say. He will only tell Madame.’ ‘Go and ask him.’

“When the servant returned to the kitchen, Putois was no longer there. This meeting between Putois and the new servant was never explained. But I think that from that day my mother began to believe that Putois might possibly exist, and that perhaps she had not invented.”

RIQUET



TO A. J.-A. COULANGHEON

## RIQUET



QUARTER-DAY had come. With his sister and daughter, Monsieur Bergeret was leaving the dilapidated old house in the Rue de Seine to take up his abode in a modern flat in the Rue de Vaugirard. Such was the decision of Zoé and the Fates.

During the long hours of the morning, Riquet wandered sadly through the devastated rooms. His most cherished habits were upset. Strange men, badly dressed, rude and foul-mouthed, disturbed his repose. They penetrated even to the kitchen where they stepped into his dish of biscuit and his bowl of fresh water. The chairs were carried off as fast as he curled himself up on them; the carpets were pulled roughly from under his weary limbs. There was no abiding-place for him, not even in his own home.

To his credit, be it said, that at first he attempted resistance. When the cistern was carried off he

barked furiously at the enemy. But no one responded to his appeal ; no one encouraged him, there was no doubt about it his efforts were regarded with disapproval. Mademoiselle Zoé said to him sharply : “ Be quiet ! ” And Mademoiselle Pauline added : “ Riquet, you are silly ! ”

Henceforth he would abstain from useless warnings. He would cease to strive alone for the public weal. In silence he deplored the devastation of the household. From room to room he sought in vain for a little quiet. When the furniture removers penetrated into a room where he had taken refuge, he prudently hid beneath an as yet unmolested table or chest of drawers. But this precaution proved worse than useless ; for soon the piece of furniture tottered over him, rose, then fell with a crash threatening to crush him. Terrified, with his hair all turned up the wrong way, he fled to another refuge no safer than the first.

But these inconveniences and even dangers were as nothing to the agony he was suffering at heart. His sentiments were the most deeply affected.

The household furniture he regarded not as things inert, but as living benevolent creatures, beneficent spirits, whose departure foreshadowed cruel misfortunes. Dishes, sugar-basins, pots and pans, all

the kitchen divinities ; arm-chairs, carpets, cushions, all the fetishes of the hearth, its lares and its domestic gods had vanished. He could not believe that so great a disaster would ever be repaired. And sorrow filled his little heart to overflowing. Fortunately Riquet's heart resembled human hearts in being easily distracted and quick to forget its misfortunes.

During the long absence of the thirsty workmen, when old Angélique's broom raised ancient dust from the floor, Riquet breathed an odour of mice and watched the flight of a spider ; thus was his versatile mind diverted. But he soon relapsed into sadness.

On the day of departure, when he beheld things growing hourly worse and worse, he grew desperate. It seemed to him above all things disastrous when he saw the linen being piled in dark cases. Pauline with eager haste was putting her frocks into a trunk. He turned away from her, as if she were doing something wrong. He shrank up against the wall and thought to himself : " Now the worst has come ; this is the end of everything." Then, whether it were that he believed things ceased to exist when he did not see them, or whether he was simply avoiding a painful sight, he took care not to look in Pauline's direction. It chanced that as she was passing to and

fro she noticed Riquet's attitude. It was sad : but to her it seemed funny, and she began to laugh. Then, still laughing, she called out : " Come here ! Riquet, come to me ! " But he did not stir from his corner, and would not even turn his head. He was not then in the mood to caress his young mistress, and, through some secret instinct, through a kind of presentiment, he was afraid of approaching the gaping trunk. Pauline called him several times. Then, as he did not respond, she went and took him up in her arms. " How unhappy we are ! " she said to him ; " what is wrong then ? " Her tone was ironical. Riquet did not understand irony. He lay in Pauline's arms, sad and inert, affecting to see nothing and to hear nothing. " Riquet, look at me ! " She said it three times and three times in vain. Then, pretending to be in a rage : " Silly creature," she cried, " in with you " ; and she threw him into the trunk and shut the lid on him. At that moment her aunt having called her, she went out of the room, leaving Riquet in the trunk.

He was seized with wild alarm ; for he was very far from supposing that he had been playfully thrown into the trunk for a mere joke. Esteeming his situation about as bad as it could be, he was desirous not to make it worse by any imprudence. So he re-

mained motionless for a few moments, holding his breath. Then he deemed it expedient to explore his dark prison. With his paws he felt the skirts and the linen on to which he had been so cruelly precipitated, endeavouring to find some way out of this terrible place. He had been thus engaged for two or three minutes, when he was called by Monsieur Bergeret, who had been getting ready to go out.

“Riquet! Riquet! Come for a walk on the quays, that is the land of glory. True they have disfigured it by erecting a railway station of hideous proportions and striking ugliness. Architecture is a lost art. They have pulled down a nice looking house at the corner of the Rue du Bac. They will doubtless put some unsightly building in its place. I trust that at least our architects may abstain from introducing on to the Quai d’Orsay that barbarous style of which they have given such a horrid example at the corner of the Rue Washington and the Champs Élysées! . . . Riquet! Riquet! Come for a walk on the quays. That is a glorious land. But architecture has deteriorated sadly since the days of Gabriel and of Louis. . . . Where is the dog? . . . Riquet! Riquet!”

The sound of Monsieur Bergeret’s voice was a great consolation to Riquet. He replied by making a noise

with his paws, scratching frantically against the wicker sides of the trunk.

"Where is the dog?" her father asked Pauline as she was returning with a pile of linen in her arms.

"He is in the trunk, Papa."

"What, in the trunk! Why is he there?" asked Monsieur Bergeret.

"Because he was silly," replied Pauline.

Monsieur Bergeret liberated his friend. Riquet followed him into the hall, wagging his tail. Then a sudden thought occurred to him. He went back into the room, ran up to Pauline and rubbed against her skirt. And not until he had wildly caressed her as evidence of his loyalty did he rejoin his master on the staircase. He would have felt himself deficient in wisdom and religious feeling had he failed to display these signs of affection to one who had been so powerful as to plunge him into a deep trunk.

In the street, Monsieur Bergeret and his dog beheld the sad sight of their household furniture scattered over the pavement. The removers had gone off to the public-house round the corner, leaving the plate-glass mirror of Mademoiselle Zoé's wardrobe to reflect the passing procession of girls, workmen, shopkeepers, and Beaux Arts students, of drays, carts and

cabs, and the chemist's shop with its bottles and its serpents of Æsculapius. Leaning against a post was Monsieur Bergeret senior, smiling in his frame, mild, pale and delicate looking, with his hair ruffled. With affectionate respect the son contemplated his parent whom he moved away from the post. He likewise lifted out of harm's way Zoé's little table, which looked ashamed at finding itself in the street.

Meanwhile Riquet was patting his master's legs with his paws, looking up at him with sorrowing beautiful eyes, which seemed to say :

“Thou, who wert once so rich and so powerful, canst thou have become poor ? Canst thou have lost thy power, O my Master ? Thou permittest men clothed in vile rags to invade thy sitting-room, thy bedroom, thy dining-room, to throw themselves upon thy furniture and pull it out of doors, to drag down the staircase thy deep arm-chair, thy chair and mine, for in it we repose side by side in the evening and sometimes in the morning too. I heard it groan in the arms of those tatterdemalions ; that chair which is a fetish and a benignant spirit. Thou didst offer no resistance to the invaders. But if thou dost no longer possess any of those genii who once filled thy dwelling, if thou hast lost all, even those little



divinities, which thou didst put on in the morning when getting out of bed, those slippers which I used to bite in my play, if thou art indigent and poor, O my Master, then what will become of me ? ”

# THE MEDITATIONS OF RIQUET



# THE MEDITATIONS OF RIQUET

## I



EN, beasts and stones grow great as they come near and loom enormous when they are upon me. It is not so with me. I remain equally great wheresoever I am.

## II

When my master places for me beneath the table the food which he was about to put into his own mouth, it is in order that he may tempt me and that he may punish me if I yield to temptation. For I cannot believe that he would deny himself for my sake.

## III

The smell of dogs is sweet in the nostrils.

## IV

My master keeps me warm when I lie behind him in his chair. It is because he is a god. In front of the fire-place is a hot stone. That stone is divine.

## V

I speak when I please. From my master's mouth proceed likewise sounds which make sense. But his meaning is not so clear as that expressed by the sounds of my voice. Every sound that I utter has a meaning. From my master's lips come forth many idle noises. It is difficult but necessary to divine the thoughts of the master.

## VI

To eat is good. To have eaten is better. For the enemy who lieth in wait to take your food is quick and crafty.

## VII

All is flux and reflux. I alone remain.

VIII

I am in the centre of all things ; men, beasts and things, friendly and adverse, are ranged about me.

IX

In sleep one beholdeth men, dogs, horses, trees, forms pleasant and unpleasant. When one awaketh these forms have vanished.

X

*Reflection.* I love my master, Bergeret, because he is powerful and terrible.

XI

An action for which one has been beaten is a bad action. An action for which one has received caresses or food is a good action.

XII

At nightfall evil powers prowl round the house. I bark in order that my master may be warned and drive them away.

## XIII

*Prayer.* O my master, Bergeret, god of courage, I adore thee. When thou art terrible, be thou praised. When thou art kind be thou praised. I crouch at thy feet : I lick thy hands. When, seated before thy table spread, thou devourest meats in abundance, thou art very great and very beautiful. Very great art thou and very beautiful when, striking fire out of a thin splint of wood, thou changest night into day. Keep me in thine house and keep out every other dog. And thou, Angélique, the cook, divinity good and great, I fear thee and I venerate thee in order that thou mayest give me much to eat.

## XIV

A dog who lacketh piety towards men and who scorneth the fetishes assembled in his master's house liveth a miserable and a wandering life.

## XV

One day, from a broken pitcher, filled with water which was being carried across the parlour, water

ran on to the polished floor. A thrashing must have been the punishment of that dirty pitcher.

XVI

Men possess the divine power of opening all doors. I by myself am only able to open a few. Doors are great fetishes which do not readily obey dogs.

XVII

The life of a dog is full of danger. If he would escape suffering he must be ever on the watch, during meals and even during sleep.

XVIII

It is impossible to know whether one has acted well towards men. One must worship them without seeking to understand them. Their wisdom is mysterious.

XIX

*Invocation.* O Fear, Fear august and maternal, Fear sacred and salutary, possess me, in danger fill me, in order that I may avoid that which is harmful,



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lest, casting myself upon the enemy, I suffer for my imprudence.

### XX

Vehicles there are which horses pull through the street. They are terrible. Other vehicles there are which move of themselves breathing loudly. These are also fearful. Men in rags are detestable, likewise such as carry baskets on their heads or roll casks. I do not love children who utter loud cries and flee from and pursue each other swiftly in the streets. The world is full of hostile and dreadful things.

## THE NECKTIE

TO MADAME FÉLIX DECORI

## THE NECKTIE



MONSIEUR BERGERET was hammering nails into the wall of his new flat. Becoming aware that he was enjoying the work, he began to wonder why it gave him pleasure to knock nails into the wall. He found the reason and lost the pleasure. For the pleasure had consisted in hammering the nails without thinking of the reason of anything. Then, as he hung his father's portrait in the place of honour in the drawing-room, he meditated on the sorrows of a philosophical mind.

"It tips forward too much," said Zoé.

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. It looks as if it were going to fall."

Monsieur Bergeret shortened the cord from which the picture hung.

"It isn't straight," said Mademoiselle Bergeret.

"Is it not?"

"No it hangs perceptibly too much to the left."

Monsieur Bergeret carefully readjusted it.

"And now how is it ?"

"It hangs too much to the right."

Monsieur Bergeret did his best to bring the picture-frame into line with the horizon, and then drew back three steps in order to inspect his handiwork.

"I think it is right," he said.

"It is all right now," said Zoé. "It worries me when a picture isn't straight."

"You are not the only one whom it worries, Zoé. There are many who feel like you. Any irregularity in simple matters is irritating because it is so easy to see the difference between what is and what ought to be. Some people cannot bear to see a badly hung wall-paper. The conditions of our humanity are indeed terrible and atrocious when a crooked picture frame upsets us."

"There is nothing extraordinary in that, Lucien. Little things occupy a large place in life. You yourself are constantly interested in trifles."

"All the years that I have been gazing at this portrait I have never remarked before what strikes me at this moment. I have just perceived that this portrait of our father is the portrait of a young man."

"Why, of course, Lucien. When the artist

Gosselin, on his return from Rome, painted father, he was not more than thirty."

"True, sister. But when I was a boy the portrait appeared to me that of a man well on in years, and that impression clung to me. Now it has suddenly vanished. The colours of Gosselin's picture have lost their brightness; the flesh has assumed an amber tint under the varnish; the lines have grown vague, merging into shadow of an olive hue. Our father's face seems to retreat further and further into a far-distant background. But that smooth forehead, those large bright eyes, the clear pure line of the delicate cheeks, the black hair thick and shining, belong, I see it now for the first time, to a man in the flower of his youth."

"Certainly," said Zoé.

"His dress and the style of his hair are those of the old days when he was young. He wears his hair ruffled. His bottle-green coat has a high collar, he wears a nankin waistcoat and his broad black silk stock tie is wound three times round his neck."

"Ten years ago old men were still to be seen wearing ties like that," said Zoé.

"Possibly," said Monsieur Bergeret. "But it is certain that Monsieur Malorey never wore any others."

"You mean the Dean of the Faculté des Lettres

at Saint-Omer, Lucien. . . . It is thirty years and more since his death."

"He was over sixty, Zoé, when I was less than twelve—but it was then that I committed a most daring outrage on his tie."

"I think I remember that rather stupid joke," said Zoé.

"No, Zoé, you do not remember my joke. If you did you would not speak of it like that. You know that Monsieur Malorey was very particular about his personal appearance and that he was always very dignified. You remember also that he was extremely decorous. He had an old-fashioned way of speaking, which was delightful. One day when he had invited our parents to dinner for the second time he himself offered a dish of artichokes to our mother, saying : ' Just a little more of the underpart, Madame.' He was speaking according to the best traditions of politeness and of language. For our ancestors never spoke of ' the bottom of an artichoke.' But the term was antiquated and our mother had great difficulty to keep from laughing. I cannot remember, Zoé, how we came to know the artichoke story."

Zoé, who was hemming white curtains, replied : " We heard it because our father

related it one day without noticing that we were present."

"And ever afterwards, Zoé, you could never see Monsieur Malorey without wanting to laugh."

"You laughed also."

"No, Zoé, I did not laugh at that. That which amuses other men does not make me laugh, that which amuses me does not make other men laugh. I have often noticed it. I see the ludicrous where no one else perceives it. I am gay and I am sad in the wrong places, and it has often made me look like a fool."

Monsieur Bergeret climbed a ladder in order to hang a view of Mount Vesuvius by night, during an eruption; the picture was a water-colour which he had inherited from a paternal ancestor.

"But I have not told you, sister, what I said to Monsieur Malorey."

"Lucien, while you are on the ladder, please put up the curtain-rods," said Zoé.

"I will," said her brother. "We were then living in a little house in a suburb of Saint-Omer."

"The curtain-rings are in the nail-box."

"I have them. . . . A little house with a garden."

"A very pretty garden," said Zoé. "It was



full of lilac bushes. On the lawn was a vase in terra cotta, at the end a maze, and a grotto rockery, and on the wall two large blue pots."

"Yes, Zoé, two large blue pots. One morning, one summer morning, Monsieur Malorey came to our house to consult some books, that were not in his own library and which he could not have found in the town library, because it had been destroyed in a fire. My father had placed his study at the Dean's disposal and the offer had been accepted. It was arranged that when he had collated his texts he would stay and lunch with us."

"Just see if the curtains are too long, Lucien."

"I will. . . ."

"That morning the heat was stifling. Among the still leaves even the birds were silent. Sitting under a tree in the garden, I perceived in the shaded study the back of Monsieur Malorey and his long hair resting on the collar of his frock-coat. Save that his hand was moving over a sheet of paper, he did not stir. There was nothing extraordinary in that. He was writing. But what did appear to me unusual . . ."

"Well, are they long enough ?"

"Not by four inches, my good Zoé."

"What, four inches ? Show me Lucien."

"Look. . . . What did appear to me unusual was to see Monsieur Malorey's tie on the window-sill. Overcome by the heat, the Dean had unwound the black cravat that three times encircled his neck. And the long piece of black silk hung from side to side out of the open window. I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to take it. I crept softly up to the wall of the house, I stretched my arm towards the tie, I pulled it; nothing stirred in the study; I pulled it again; there it was in my hand; I went and hid it in one of the large blue pots in the garden."

"It was not a very brilliant joke, Lucien."

"No. . . I hid it in one of the large blue pots and I took care to cover it with leaves and moss. Monsieur Malorey continued for some time at work in the study. I watched his motionless back and the long white hair flowing over the collar of his frock-coat. Then the servant called me to lunch. As I entered the dining-room the most unexpected sight met my gaze. Between our father and mother I saw Monsieur Malorey grave, calm, but without his necktie. He had all his usual dignity. He was even august. But he was not wearing his tie. This filled me with surprise. I knew he could not be wearing it, since it was in the blue pot. And yet I was prodigiously astonished to see him without it.

"I cannot think, Madame," he said softly to our mother. . . . She interrupted him : "My husband will lend you one, dear sir."

"And I reflected : 'I hid it in jest, he failed to find it in earnest.' But I was astonished."

## THE MONTIL MANŒUVRES

TO OCTAVE MIRBEAU

## THE MONTIL MANŒUVRES



THE engagement had begun ; everything was going well. At ten o'clock in the morning General Decuir, of the southern army, whose brigade occupied a strong position beneath the woods of Saint-Colomban, effected a brilliant reconnaissance which demonstrated the absence of the enemy. Then the soldiers broke their fast, and the General, leaving his escort at Saint-Luchaire, drove, accompanied by Captain Varnot, in the motor-car which had come to fetch him, to the Château de Montil, where the Baronne de Bonmont had invited him to lunch. The village of Montil was hung with flags. At the entrance to the park, the General passed beneath a triumphal arch erected in his honour and decorated with flags, trophies and branches of oak interwoven with boughs of laurel.

On the steps of her castle the Baronne de Bonmont received the General and led him into

a vast hall hung with weapons and glittering with steel.

"Your residence is superb, Madame, and the country is beautiful," said the General. "I have often been to shoot about here, chiefly with the Brécés, where I had the pleasure of meeting your son, if I am not mistaken."

"No, you are not mistaken," said Ernest de Bonmont, who had driven the General from Saint-Luchaire. "And to say one is bored at the Brécés is to put it mildly!"

It was a small luncheon party. Besides the General, the Captain, the Baronne and her son, there were only Madame Worms-Clavelin and Joseph Lacrisse.

"You must take things as you find them!" said Madame de Bonmont placing the General on her right at a table decorated with flowers over which towered an equestrian statue of Napoleon in Sèvres porcelain.

At a glance the General took in the long gallery hung with the finest Van Orley tapestries.

"You have plenty of room here!"

"The General might have brought his brigade," said the Captain.

"I should have been delighted to receive it," replied the Baronne smiling.

The talk was simple, quiet and cordial. Every one had the good taste to avoid politics. The General was a royalist. He did not say so, but it was well known. His manners were perfect. His two sons had been arrested for crying: "Panama!" on the boulevards when President Loubet came into office. The General's own attitude had always been discreet. Horses and cannon were the topics of conversation.

"The new 75 is a gem," said the General.

"One cannot too highly commend the ease with which the firing is regulated. It is really wonderful," added Captain Varnot.

"And during the manœuvres," said Madame Worms-Clavelin, "by a new and ingenious arrangement the covers of the ammunition wagons serve as a shelter for the gunners."

Madame la Préfète was congratulated on her military knowledge.

Madame Worms-Clavelin appeared to equal advantage when she spoke of Notre-Dame des Belles-Feuilles.

"You know, General, that in this department, no further away than Brécé, we have a miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin."

"I have heard of it," replied the General.

"Before he was made a Bishop," continued



Madame Worms-Clavelin, "the Abbé Guitrel was greatly interested in the apparitions of Notre-Dame des Belles-Feuilles. He even wrote a little book to prove that Notre-Dame des Belles-Feuilles is the special protectress of the French army."

"Tell me where I can procure a copy and I will read it," said the General.

Madame Worms-Clavelin promised to send him the book.

In short throughout the meal not a word was uttered that could be called offensive or tending to the malicious. After lunch, there was a walk in the park. Then Captain Varnot took his leave.

"Let my escort wait for me at Saint-Luchaire, Captain," said the General. And turning to Lacrisse, he said :

"Manœuvres are a picture of war, but they are not a true picture because everything is thought out and planned whereas in war it is the unexpected that happens."

"Will you come and see the pheasantry, General?" said Madame de Bonmont.

"With pleasure, Madame."

She turned round.

"Are you not coming, Ernest ?"

Ernest had been stopped on his way by the worthy Raulin, mayor of Montil.

"Excuse me, Baron," he was saying. "But if you could say a word to General Decuir for me, if only the artillery would pass over St. John's Hill, across my lucerne field."

"What! Haven't you a good crop, Raulin? Is that why you want it trampled on?"

"Not at all, not at all. The crop is excellent, Baron; the harvest next month promises to be good. But compensation is good also. Last time it was Houssiaux who had it. Isn't it my turn now? I am mayor, I bear all the burdens of the commune, is it not fair therefore that when there is any bonus to be given. . . .?"

The General was taken to the pheasantry.

"It is time," he said, "that I rejoined my brigade."

"Oh! You will reach it in no time with my thirty horse-power," said the young baron.

They inspected the kennels, the stables and the gardens.

"Your roses are superb," said the General, who was fond of flowers. Through the perfumed air there boomed the sound of cannon.

"It has a festal sound and uplifts the heart," said Lacrisse.

"Like the sound of bells," said Madame Worms-Clavelin.

"You are a true Frenchwoman, Madame," said the General. "Every word you utter breathes the purest patriotism."

It was four o'clock. The General could not stay a minute longer. Fortunately in "the thirty horse-power" he would reach his brigade in no time.

With the young baron, Lacrisse and the chauffeur he entered the car, and once again passed beneath his triumphal arch.

In forty minutes he was at Saint-Luchaire. But his escort was not there. In vain the four motorists looked for Captain Varnot. The village was deserted. Not a soldier to be found. A butcher was passing in his cart. They asked him where Decuir's division was: he replied:

"Try the Cagny road. Just now I heard firing in the direction of Cagny, and it was loud too, I can assure you."

"Cagny, where is that?" inquired the General.

"Don't you trouble, I know," said the Baron. "I will drive you there."

And, as the drive would be a long one, he gave the General a dust-coat, a cap and goggles.

They started on the departmental road; they passed Saint-André, Villeneuve, Letaf, Saint-Porçain, Truphême, Mirange, and they saw the Cagny pond shining like brass in the light of the setting sun. On the high-road, they met dragoons of the northern army who knew nothing of the whereabouts of the Decuir brigade, but they maintained that the southern army was engaged at Saint-Paulain.

Saint-Paulain was forty-five kilometres distant, in the direction of Montil.

The car turned round, went back down the departmental road, returned through Mirange, Truphême, Saint-Porçain, Letaf, Villeneuve and Saint-André.

"Put on more speed," ordered the Baron.

And the car passed through the streets of Verryles-Fougerais, Suttières and Rary-la-Vicomté, raising a cloud of dust golden like a glory and crushing pigs and poultry. Two kilometres from Saint-Paulain, they came on the outposts of the southern army holding La Saulaie, Mesville and Le Sourdaïs. There they learned that the whole of the northern army was on the other side of the Ilette.

They drove towards Torcy-la-Mirande in order to strike the river by the heights of Vieux-Bac.

When in the course of an hour they began to perceive by the evening light a sheet of white mist hanging over the low lying meadows :

“Gad,” said the young Baron, “we can’t cross : the Ilette Bridge is destroyed.”

“What !” exclaimed the General, “the Ilette Bridge destroyed ? What’s that you say ? The Bridge destroyed !”

“Why, General ! yes. In the plan of the manœuvres the Bridge is destroyed in theory.”

The General did not appreciate the joke.

“I admire your wit young man,” he said sharply.

At Vieux-Bac they thundered across the iron bridge and followed the ancient Roman road, which connects Torcy-la-Mirande with the chief town of the department. In the sky, Venus was kindling her silver flame close by the crescent moon. They travelled about thirty kilometres without meeting any troops. At Saint-Évariste there was a terrible hill to climb. The car groaned like a tired beast, but did not stop. Coming down it went over some stones and was on the point of capsizing in a ditch. Then the road was excellent as far as

Mallemanche, where they arrived at night, during a surprise.

The sky was glittering with stars. Trumpets were sounding. Lanterns were casting a yellow gleam on the blue road. Foot soldiers were pillaging the houses. The inhabitants were at the windows.

"Although merely theoretical it is all extremely impressive," said Lacrisse.

The General was told that his brigade was in possession of Villeneuve on the left wing of the victorious army. The enemy was in full retreat.

Villeneuve is at the junction of the Ilette and the Claine, twenty kilometres from Mallemanche.

"We must make for Villeneuve!" said the General. "At last we know what we have to do, and a good thing too."

The Villeneuve road was so encumbered with artillery, ammunition wagons and gunners asleep and wrapped in their great cloaks, that it was very difficult for the car to thread its way. A canteen-woman sitting in a cart decorated with Chinese lanterns hailed the motorists and offered them coffee and liqueurs.

"We won't say no," replied the General.

"We have swallowed dust enough during the manœuvres."

"They drank a liqueur and pressed on to Villeneuve, which was occupied by the infantry.

"But where is my brigade?" cried the General, who was growing anxious.

They questioned eagerly all the officers they met. But no one could give them news of the Decuir brigade.

"What! no news? Then it is not at Villeneuve? Incredible!"

"Gentlemen," they heard in a woman's voice, shrill and bell-like. They looked up and beheld a head studded with curl-papers; it belonged to the postmistress.

"Gentlemen, there are two Villeneuves. This is Villeneuve-sur-Claine. Perhaps it is Villeneuve-la-Bataille that you want.

"Perhaps," said the Baron.

"That is a long way off," said the postmistress. You must go first to Montil. . . . Do you know Montil?"

"Yes," replied the Baron, "we know Montil."

"Then you go on to Saint-Michel-du-Mont; you take the main road and . . . ."

From the window of a neighbouring house with

gilded scutcheons came out a head wrapped in a comforter :

“ Gentlemen . . . .”

And the notary of Villeneuve-sur-Claine gave his advice :

“ To reach Villeneuve-la-Bataille, you would do better to cross through the Forest of Tongues. . . . You go to La Croix du Perron, you turn to the right . . .”

“ That’s enough. I know the Forest of Tongues,” said the Baron, “ I have hunted there with the Brécés. . . . Thank you, sir. . . . Thank you, Mademoiselle.”

“ Don’t mention it,” said the postmistress.

“ At your service, gentlemen,” said the notary.

“ What if we went to the inn and had a cocktail ? ” said the Baron.

“ I should like something to eat,” said Lacrisse.  
“ I am done up.”

“ Courage, gentlemen,” said the General. “ We will make up for it at Villeneuve-la-Bataille.”

And they started. They passed through Vély, La Roche, Les Saules, Meulette, La Taillerie and entered the Forest of Tremble. A dazzling light ran before them into the shades of night and of the forest. They reached La Croix-du-Perron, then the



Roi-Henri cross-roads. They fled wildly through the silence and solitude. They saw the deer glide by and the lights in the charcoal-burners' huts. Suddenly in a deep cutting the ominous noise of an explosion made them shudder. The car skidded and knocked up against a tree.

"What is the matter?" asked the General, who had been thrown head over heels.

Lacrisse groaned; he was lying on a bed of fern.

But Ernest, lantern in hand, was saying dismally:

"The tyre has burst. . . . But worse than that the front wheel is twisted."

ÉMILE



## ÉMILE



ADEMOISELLE BERGERET was silent. She smiled, which was unusual.

“Why are you laughing, Zoé?” asked Monsieur Bergeret.

“I was thinking of Émile Vincent.”

“What Zoé! You can think of that excellent man, whom we have just lost, whom we loved and whom we mourn, and you can laugh!”

“I laugh because I can see him again as he used to be, and the old memories are the strongest. But you should know, Lucien, that all smiles are not joyful any more than all tears are sorrowful. It takes an old maid to explain that.”

“I am not unaware, Zoé, that laughter is the result of nervous agitation. Madame de Custine as she bade adieu in the prison to her husband condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, was seized with a fit of uncontrollable laughter at the sight of a prisoner walking past her in dressing-

gown and night-cap, with his face painted and a candle in his hand."

"That is not at all the same thing," said Zoé.

"No," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "But I remember what happened to me when I heard of the death of poor Demay who used to sing comic songs at the cafés concerts. It was one evening during a reception at the Prefecture. Worms-Clavelin said: 'Demay is dead.'

"I for my part received the tidings in decorous sadness. And, reflecting that never again should I hear that wondrous woman sing: *Je cas' des noisettes en m'asseyant d'ssus*,\* I tasted to the dregs all the melancholy the thought engendered. I let it drip into my soul and relapsed into silence. The Chief Secretary, Monsieur Lacarelle, exclaimed in his deep voice, through his military moustache: 'Demay dead! What a loss to the gaiety of France!' 'It was in the evening paper,' said Judge Pilloux. 'True,' added General Cartier de Chalmont gently, 'and I am informed that she died consoled by the rites of the Church.'

"At the General's simple words suddenly a strange, incongruous vision flashed before my eyes. I imagined the end of the world as it is

\* I crack nuts by sitting on them.

described in the 'Dies Irae,' according to the testimony of David and the Sibyl. I beheld the age reduced to ashes ; I saw the dead issuing forth from their tombs, and, at the angel's summons, crowding before the Judgment Seat, and the massive Demay mother-naked at the Lord's right hand. At this conception I burst out laughing in the presence of the astonished officials civil and military. But worse still, the vision obsessed me and I added between bursts of laughter : ' You will see that by her very presence, she will upset the solemnity of the Last Judgment.' Never, Zoé, were words less comprehensible, less relevant."

" You are absurd, Lucien. I never have those curious visions. I smiled because I imagined our poor friend Vincent just as he was in life. That was all. It was quite natural. I mourn for him with all my heart. We never had a better friend."

" I too was very fond of him, Zoé, and I too when I think of him am tempted to smile. It was strange how so much military ardour came to reside in so small a body and how a soul so heroic could dwell in a form so spruce and plump. His life passed quietly in the suburb of a provincial town. He was a brushmaker at Les Tintelleries. But there was

room in his heart for something besides his business."

"He was even smaller than Uncle Jean," said Mademoiselle Bergeret.

"And he was martial, he was civic, he was imperial," said Monsieur Bergeret.

"He was a very excellent man," said Mademoiselle Bergeret.

"He was in the war of 1870, Zoé. In that year he was twenty. I was only twelve. He seemed to me old and full of years. One day in the Terrible Year, he entered our peaceful provincial dwelling with the clashing of steel. He came to bid us farewell. He was dressed in the startling uniform of a *franc-tireur*. Protruding from his scarlet belt were the butts of two horse-pistols. And because a smile must enter even into the most tragic moments, the unconscious humour of some unknown armourer had hitched him to an enormous cavalry sword. Do not blame me for the expression, Zoé; it occurs in one of Cicero's letters. 'Whoever,' says the orator, 'hitched my son-in-law to that sword?'

"What astonished me most in the equipment of our friend Émile Vincent was this huge sword. To my childish mind it seemed to augur victory. You, Zoé, I believed, were more impressed by his

boots, for you looked up from your work and cried :  
‘ Why it is Puss in Boots ! ’ ”

“ Did I say ‘ Puss in Boots.’ Poor Émile.”

“ You said ‘ Puss in Boots ’ ; and you need not regret it, Zoé. Madame d’Abrantès in her Memoirs relates how a young girl seeing Napoleon, then young and slender, ridiculously accoutred as a General of the Republic, likewise called him ‘ Puss in Boots.’ Bonaparte never forgave her for it. Our friend was more magnanimous ; the title did not offend him. Émile Vincent and his company were placed under the command of a general who did not like *francs-tireurs*, and who thus harangued them : ‘ It is not everything to be dressed for a carnival. You must know how to fight.’ ”

“ The caustic speech did not trouble my friend Vincent. He was splendid throughout the campaign. One day he was seen to approach the enemy’s outposts with all the calm of a short-sighted man and a hero. He could not see three steps before him. Nothing could make him retreat. For the remaining thirty years of his life, while he was making carpet-brooms, he lived on the memory of that campaign. He read military newspapers, presided over meetings of his former companions in arms, was present at the unveiling of



monuments raised to the soldiers of 1870. When from time to time there were erected on French soil monuments to Vercingetorix, to Jeanne d'Arc, to the soldiers of the Loire, at the head of the workmen in his factory, Émile defiled before them. He made patriotic speeches. And, here Zoé, we approach a scene in the comedy of life, the melancholy humour of which may one day be appreciated. During the Dreyfus Affair it occurred to Émile Vincent to say that Esterhazy was a fraud and a traitor. He said it because he knew it was so and because he was far too candid ever to conceal the truth. From that day he was regarded as the enemy of his country and of the army. He was treated as a traitor and an alien. He suffered from heart disease, and his grief at this treatment aggravated the malady. He died of sorrow and of shock. The last time I saw him he was talking of military tactics and strategy. They were his favourite topic of conversation. Although the campaign of '70, in which he had served, was conducted with the greatest disorder and confusion, he was persuaded that the art of war is the finest of all arts. And I fear that I must have vexed him by saying that properly speaking there is no art of war, for the arts that are really employed in campaigns are those of

peace ; baking, farriery, the maintenance of order, chemistry, etc.”

“ Why did you say such things, Lucien ? ” asked Mademoiselle Bergeret.

“ Because I was convinced of their truth,” replied her brother. “ What is called strategy is really the art practised by Cook’s agency. It consists in crossing rivers by way of bridges and getting the other side of mountains through passes. As for military tactics, the rules are childish. Great Captains pay no attention to them. Although they would never admit it, they leave much to chance. Their art is to create prejudices in their favour. Conquest becomes easy to them when they are believed to be unconquerable. It is only on a plan that a battle assumes that aspect of order and regularity which reveals a dominant will.”

“ Poor Émile Vincent ! ” sighed Mademoiselle Bergeret. “ He was indeed passionately fond of the army. And I agree with you that he must have suffered cruelly when he found military society treating him as an enemy. General Cartier de Chalmot’s wife was very hard on him. She knew better than anyone that he subscribed largely to military charities. And yet she would have nothing to do with him when she heard that he had called

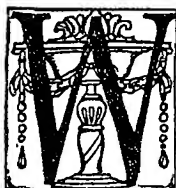
Esterhazy a fraud and a traitor. She broke with him in the most undisguised fashion. One day when he came to her house, she went close up to the hall where he was waiting and exclaimed so that he might hear her: 'Tell him that I am not at home.' Nevertheless she is not a malicious woman."

"No certainly," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "She acted according to that holy simplicity of which still better examples may be found in earlier times. Only commonplace virtues are left to us nowadays. And poor Émile died of nothing but grief."

ADRIENNE BUQUET

TO DR. GEORGES DUMAS

## ADRIENNE BUQUET



WE were finishing our dinner at the tavern when Laboullée said to me :

“I admit that second-sight, hypnotic suggestion from a distance, presentiments subsequently fulfilled, all those phenomena dependent on a condition of the organism at present ill-defined, are not for the most part proved in such a manner as to satisfy the demands of scientific criticism. They nearly all rest on evidence which, though genuine, permits of some uncertainty as to the nature of the phenomena. That the facts about them are vague, I admit. But that they are possible I cannot doubt since I myself have witnessed one. By a happy chance I was myself enabled to make the minutest scrutiny. You may believe me when I tell you that I proceeded methodically and that I was careful to eliminate every possibility of error.”

As he uttered this sentence, the young doctor with both hands smote his hollow chest padded with

pamphlets and inclined towards me across the table his bald head with its projecting forehead.

“Yes, my good fellow,” he added, “by a wonderful stroke of luck one of those phenomena described by Myers and Podmore as ‘phantoms of the living’ took place in all its phases before the very eyes of a man of science. I observed everything and noted everything down.”

“I am listening.”

“The time of the occurrence,” resumed Laboullée, “was the summer of ’91. My friend, Paul Buquet, of whom I have often spoken to you, was then living with his wife in a little flat in the Rue de Grenelle, opposite the fountain. You did not know Buquet?”

“I have seen him two or three times. A big fellow, bearded up to the eyes. His wife was dark, pale, large featured with long grey eyes.”

“Exactly: a bilious temperament, nervous but fairly well balanced. However, when a woman lives in Paris her nerves get the upper hand and—then the deuce is in it. Did you ever see Adrienne?”

“I met her one evening in the Rue de la Paix, standing with her husband in front of a jeweller’s window, her eyes fixed on some sapphires. A good-looking woman and deucedly well dressed for the wife of a poor wretch buried in the cellars of a

manufacturing chemist. Buquet was never successful, was he ?

“ For five years Buquet had been working for the firm of Jacob, manufacturers of photographic materials and apparatus in the Boulevard Magenta. From day to day he expected to be made a partner. Although he did not earn his thousands, he had a fairly good position. His prospects were not bad. He was a patient, simple fellow and hard working. He was the kind to succeed in the long run. Meanwhile his wife cost him little. Like a true Parisian, she was an excellent manager, for ever making wonderful bargains in linen, frocks, laces and jewels. She astonished her husband by her cleverness in dressing extremely well on nothing at all and Paul was gratified to see her always looking so nice and wearing such elegant under-linen. But these details cannot interest you.”

“ My dear Laboullée, I am very interested.”

“ At any rate all this chatter is beside the point. As you know I was Paul Buquet’s schoolfellow. We knew each other in the second class at Louis-le-Grand ; and we had not lost sight of one another when, at the age of twenty-six, before he had made his position, he married Adrienne for love, and with nothing but what she stood up in, as we say.



Our friendship did not cease with his marriage. Rather, Adrienne was kind to me, and I used often to dine with the young couple. As you know, I am doctor to the actor Laroche; I mix with theatrical folk, who from time to time give me tickets. Adrienne and her husband were very fond of the theatre. When I had a box for the evening I used to go and dine with them and take them afterwards to the Comédie-Française. At dinner time I was always sure to find Buquet, who came home from his factory regularly at half-past six, his wife and their friend Géraud."

"Géraud," I inquired, "Marcel Géraud who was in a bank and who used to wear such beautiful ties?"

"The very same. He was a constant visitor at the house. Being a confirmed bachelor and sociable, he dined there every day. He used to bring lobsters, *pâtés* and all kinds of dainties. He was pleasant, amiable and taciturn. Buquet could not get along without him, and we used to take him to the theatre."

"How old was he?"

"Géraud? I don't know. Between thirty and forty. . . . One day when Laroche had given me a box, I went as usual to the Rue de Grenelle, to my

friends, the Buquets. I was rather late, and when I arrived dinner was ready. Paul was complaining of being hungry ; but Adrienne could not make up her mind to sit down to table in Géraud's absence. 'My children,' I cried, 'I have a box in the second row for the Français! They are playing "Denise"! ' 'Come,' said Buquet, 'let us have dinner quickly and try not to miss the first act.' The servant put dinner on the table. Adrienne seemed anxious, and it was evident that she turned against every mouthful. Buquet was noisily swallowing vermicelli, catching the threads hanging from his moustache with his tongue. 'Women are extraordinary,' he exclaimed. 'Just fancy, Laboullée, Adrienne is anxious because Géraud has not come to dinner this evening. She imagines all manner of things. Tell her how absurd she is. Géraud may have been detained. He has his business. He is a bachelor ; no one has a right to ask him how he spends his time. What surprises me is that he should devote nearly all his evenings to us. It is very good of him. The least we can do is to leave him some liberty. My principle is never to worry about what my friends are doing. But women are different.' Madame Buquet in a trembling voice rejoined: 'I am anxious. I fear something may have happened

to Monsieur Géraud.' Meanwhile Buquet was hurrying on the meal. 'Sophie!' he called to the servant, 'bring in the beef, the salad! Sophie! the cheese! the coffee.' I observed that Madame Buquet had eaten nothing. 'Come,' said her husband, 'go and dress; and don't make us lose the first act. A play by Dumas is very different from an operetta of which all you want is to catch an air or two. Every play of Dumas' is a series of logical deductions, not one of which must be lost. Go, my love; as for me I have only to put on my frock-coat.' She rose, and slowly, as if almost against her will, passed into her room.

"We drank our coffee, her husband and I, smoking our cigarettes. 'That good Géraud,' said Paul, 'I am vexed all the same that he isn't here this evening. He would have been glad to see "Denise." But can you understand Adrienne's worrying over his absence? I have tried in vain to make her understand that the good fellow may have business which he does not confide to us. Who can tell? Why it may be a love affair! She won't understand. Give me a cigarette.' Just as I was handing him my case, we heard proceeding from the next room a long cry of terror followed by a dull bumpish thud, the sound of something falling. 'Adrienne!'

cried Buquet. And he rushed into the bedroom. I followed. We found Adrienne lying full length on the floor, motionless, her face white and her eyes turned up. There was no epileptic or kindred symptom, no foam on the lips. The limbs were extended but not rigid. The pulse was rapid and unequal. I helped her husband to put her into an arm-chair. Almost immediately her circulation was restored ; the blood rushed to her face, which was generally of a dull white. 'There,' she said, pointing to her wardrobe mirror, 'there! I saw him there. As I was fastening my bodice, I saw him in the glass. I turned round, thinking he was behind me. But seeing no one I understood and fell.'

"Meanwhile I was trying to ascertain whether she had sustained any injury from her fall and I found none. Buquet was giving her sugared *eau des carmes*. 'Come, my love,' he was saying, 'gather yourself together! Who was it you saw? What do you say?' She turned white again. 'Oh! I saw him, him, Marcel.' 'She saw Géraud! that is odd,' cried Buquet. 'Yes, I saw him,' she resumed gravely: 'he looked at me without speaking, like that.' And she assumed a haggard look. Buquet turned towards me wonderingly. 'Don't be anxious,' I replied, 'such illusions are not serious, they may

proceed from indigestion. We will consider the matter at leisure. For the moment we may put it on one side. At La Charité I know a patient suffering from gastric disease who used to see cats under all the furniture.'

"In a few minutes Madame Buquet having completely recovered, her husband took out his watch and said: 'If you think that the theatre will not do her any harm, Laboullée, it is time we started. I will tell Sophie to go for a cab.' Adrienne quickly put on her hat. 'Paul! Paul! Doctor! do listen: let us go to Monsieur Géraud's first. I am anxious, more anxious than I can tell you.'

"'You are mad!' cried Buquet. 'Whatever do you imagine is wrong with Géraud? We saw him yesterday in perfect health.'

"She gave me a look so imploring that the burning intensity of it went straight to my heart. 'Laboullée, my friend, let us go at once to Monsieur Géraud's.'

"I could not refuse her, she asked so entreatingly. Paul was grumbling: he wanted to see the first act. I said to him: 'We had better go to Geraud's, it will not take us far out of our way.' The cab was waiting for us. I called to the driver: '5 Rue du Louvre. And as quick as you can.'

"Géraud lived at number 5 Rue du Louvre, not far from his bank, in a little three-roomed flat filled with neckties. They were the good fellow's weakness. Barely had we stopped at the door when Buquet leaped from the cab and looking in at the porter's lodge, asked: 'How is Monsieur Géraud?' The *concierge* replied: 'Monsieur Géraud returned at five o'clock and took his letters. He has not gone out since. If you want to see him, it is the back staircase, on the fourth floor, to the right.' But Buquet was already at the cab door, crying: 'Géraud is at home. You see, my love, how absurd you were. To the Comédie Française, driver.' Then Adrienne almost threw herself out of the cab. 'Paul, I implore you, go up to Géraud's. See him. See him, you must.'

"'Go up four flights!' he said, shrugging his shoulders. 'Adrienne you will make us miss the play. Really, when a woman once gets an idea into her head. . . .'

"I remained alone in the cab with Madame Buquet, and I saw her eyes turned towards the house door and gleaming in the darkness. At length Paul returned: 'Well,' he said, 'I rang three times and without an answer. After all, my love, he must have had his reasons for not wishing to be disturbed.'

He may be with a woman. There would be nothing astonishing in that.' Adrienne's look became so tragic, that I myself felt anxious. When I came to think of it, it was unnatural for Géraud, who never dined at home, to remain up there from five o'clock in the afternoon until half-past seven. 'Wait here for me,' I said to Monsieur and Madame Buquet, 'I will go and speak to the *concierge*.' The woman also thought it strange that Géraud should not have gone out to dinner as usual. It was she who waited on the fourth-floor tenant, so she had the key of the flat. She took it down from the rack and offered to go up with me. When we had reached the landing, she opened the door, and from the vestibule called three or four times: 'Monsieur Géraud!' Receiving no reply, she ventured to enter the first room which was the bedroom. Again she called: 'Monsieur Géraud! Monsieur Géraud!' No reply. It was quite dark. We had no matches. 'There must be a box of Swedish matches on the *table de nuit*,' the woman said, beginning to tremble and afraid to move. I began to feel on the table and my fingers came in contact with a sticky substance. 'There is no mistake about that,' I thought, 'It is blood.'

"When at length we had lit a candle, we saw

Géraud stretched on his bed, with a wound in his head. His arm was hanging down on to the carpet where his revolver had fallen. A letter stained with blood was open on the table. It was in his handwriting and addressed to Monsieur and Madame Buquet. It began thus: 'My dear friends, you have been the charm and joy of my life.' It went on to tell them of his resolve to die without clearly explaining for what reason, but he hinted that financial embarrassment was the cause of his suicide. I perceived that death had taken place about an hour ago. So that he had killed himself at the very moment when Madame Buquet had seen him in the glass.

"Now is not this just what I was telling you, a perfectly authentic case of second sight, or to use a more exact term an instance of that curious psychical synchronism which science is studying to-day with a zeal which far surpasses its success."

"It may be something quite different," I replied. "Are you quite sure that there was nothing between Marcel Géraud and Madame Buquet?"

"Why? . . . I never noticed anything. And after all, what would that prove? . . ."

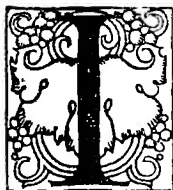




## THE INTAGLIO



## THE INTAGLIO



HAD come to him at noon by invitation. We lunched in the dining-room long as a church nave, a veritable treasure-house filled with the ancient gold and silver work he has collected. I found him not exactly sad but meditative. His conversation now and again suggested the light and graceful turn of his wit. An occasional word revealed the rare delicacy of his artistic tastes and his passion for sport, by no means allayed by a terrible fall from his horse which had split his head open. But constantly the flow of his ideas was checked as if they had been barred by some obstacle.

From this conversation, which was somewhat fatiguing to follow, all I retain is that he had just sent a couple of white peacocks to his chateau of Raray and that without any special reason he had for three weeks been neglecting his friends, forsaking even the most intimate, Monsieur and Madame N.

It was plain enough to me that he had not asked

me to come and listen to confidences such as those. While we were taking our coffee, I asked him what it was he had to tell me. He looked at me rather surprised :

“ Had I anything to tell you ? ”

“ *Dame !* You wrote : ‘ Come and lunch to-morrow. I want to talk to you. ’ ”

As he was silent I took the letter from my pocket and showed it to him. The address was in his attractive running hand, somewhat irregular. On the envelope there was a seal in violet wax.

He passed his hand over his forehead.

“ I remember. Be so kind as to go to Féral’s, he will show you a study by Romney ; a young woman ; golden hair the reflection of which gilds her cheeks and forehead. . . . Pupils dark blue, giving a bluish tinge to the whole eye. . . . The warm freshness of her complexion. . . . It is delicious. And an arm like gold-beater’s skin. However, look at it and see if. . . . ”

He paused. And with his hand on the door handle :

“ Wait for me. I will put on my coat and we will go out together. ”

Left alone in the dining-room, I went to the window, and, more attentively than before, examined

the seal of violet wax. It bore the imprint of an antique intaglio, representing a satyr raising the veil of a nymph who was asleep at the foot of a pillar, under a laurel-tree. During the best Roman period the subject was a favourite one with painters and with engravers of precious stones. This representation appeared to me excellent. The purity of the style, the perfect feeling for form, the harmonious grouping, converted this scene no longer than one's fingernail, into a composition vast and imposing.

I was under the spell when my friend appeared through the half-open door.

"Come, let's be off," he said.

He had his hat on and seemed to be in a hurry to go out.

I congratulated him on his seal.

"I was not aware that you possessed this beautiful gem."

He replied that he had not had it long, only about six weeks. It was a find. He took it from the finger on which he wore it set in a ring, and put it in my hand.

It is well known that stones engraved in this fine classic style are generally cornelians. I was somewhat surprised therefore to see a dull gem, of a dark violet.

"What!" I cried, "an amethyst."

"Yes, a melancholy stone and unlucky. Do you think it is a genuine antique?"

He called for a magnifying glass. And now I was better able to admire the carving of the intaglio. It was obviously a masterpiece of Greek glyptography dating from the early Empire. Among all the precious stones in the Museum at Naples I had never seen anything more beautiful. With the glass it was possible to distinguish on the pillar an emblem often found on monuments dedicated to some subject of the Bacchic cycle. I pointed it out to him.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. The gem was in an open setting. It occurred to me to examine the reverse; and I was very surprised to find thereon an inscription of a clumsy crudity dating evidently from a period much less remote than that of the intaglio. In a measure these signs resembled the engraving on those Abraxas stones \* so familiar to antiquaries. In spite of my inexperience I believed them to be magic signs. That was also my friend's opinion.

\* Stones so called because they bore the mystic words Abraxas, Abrasax, known also as Basilidian stones because they were the symbol of the Basilidians, a gnostic sect.

"It is thought," he said, "to be a cabalistic formula, imprecations taken from a Greek poet . . ."

"Which poet ? "

"I am not very well up in them."

"Theocritus."

"Theocritus perhaps."

Through the glass I could make out distinctly a group of four letters :

K H P H

"That doesn't spell a name," said my friend.

"I pointed out to him that in Greek it is the equivalent of :

K E R E

And I gave him back the stone. He looked at it long in a dazed manner and then put it on to his finger.

"Come," he said briskly. "Come."

"Where are you going ? "

"Towards the Madeleine. And you ? "

"I ? Where am I going ? *Parbleu !* I am going to Gaulot's to see a horse which he refuses to buy until I have looked at it. For, as you know, I am an authority on horses and something of a veterinary surgeon to boot. I may describe myself also as a furniture broker, an upholsterer, an architect, a



gardener, and if need be a stock-jobber. Ah ! my friend if only I had the energy I would cut out all the Jews."

We went out into the *faubourg* ; and, as we walked my friend assumed a gait very different from his habitual nonchalance. His pace soon became so rapid that I had difficulty in keeping up with him. In front of us was a woman rather well dressed. He called my attention to her.

" Her back is round, and she is heavy of figure. But look at her ankle. I am sure the leg is charming. Have you not noticed that the build of horses, of women, and of all fine animals is very much the same ? Coarse and large in the fleshy parts, their limbs become thin towards the joints, where they display the fineness of the bones. Look at that woman ; above her waist she is not worth a glance. But her limbs ! How free, how powerful ! How well balanced the movement of her walk ! And how fine the leg just above the ankle ! And the thigh I am sure is nervously supple and really beautiful "

Then he added with that acquired wisdom which he was ever ready to communicate :

" You must not ask everything from one woman ; you must take beauty where you find it. It is deucedly rare, is beauty ! "

Whereupon, through a mysterious association of ideas, he raised his left hand and looked at his intaglio. I said to him :

“Then have you abandoned your little armorial tree and taken as your crest that marvellous Bacchante ? ”

“Ah ! Yes, the beech, the *fau* of Du Fau. In Poitou, under Louis XVI, my great grandfather was what was then called a nobleman, that is he was an ennobled commoner. Later he joined a revolutionary club at Poitiers and acquired national property, which procures for me to-day, in a society of Jews and Americans, the friendship of princes and the rank of an aristocrat. Why did I forsake the *fau* of the Du Fau ? Why ? It was worth almost as much as the *chêne* \* of Duchesne de la Sicotière. And I have exchanged it for a bacchante, a barren laurel and an emblematical stone.”

Just as with ironical emphasis he was uttering these words, we reached the house of his friend Gaulot ; but Du Fau passed the two copper knockers representing Neptune, gleaming on the door like bath taps.

“I thought you were so eager to go and see Gaulot ? ”

\* Oak.

He appeared not to hear me and quickened his step. He continued breathlessly as far as the Rue Matignon, down which he turned. Then suddenly he stopped in front of a tall, melancholy, five-storied house. In silence he looked anxiously at the flat stucco façade with its numerous windows.

"Are you going to be there long?" I asked him. "Do you know that Madame Cère lives in this house?"

I knew that name would annoy him. Madame Cère was a woman whose artificial beauty, well-known venality and obvious stupidity he had always detested. Old and of neglected appearance she was suspected of being a shop-lifter and appropriating lace. But in a weak almost plaintive voice, he replied:

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. Look at those windows on the second story and those hideous curtains with red leopards."

He shook his head.

"But certainly Madame Cère lives there. At this very moment she is probably behind one of those red leopards."

He seemed as if he would like to call on her. I expressed my surprise.

"Once you could not tolerate her. That was when every one considered her beautiful and ornamental; when she inspired fatal passion and tragic love you used to say: 'If it were only for the coarseness of her skin the woman would fill me with insurmountable disgust. But besides she is flat-chested and big-jointed.' Now, when all her charms have faded, have you succeeded in discovering one of those little points of beauty, with which as you were saying just now, we ought to be contented? What do you make of the fineness of her ankle and the nobility of her heart? A tall gawky woman without bust or hips, who, as she entered a salon, cast a sweeping gaze round the room, and by this simple trick attracted a crowd of those vain and imbecile creatures who ruin themselves for women devoid of natural charms."

I paused, rather ashamed of having spoken thus of a woman. But this woman had given such abundant proof of her revolting malice, that I could not resist the feeling of repugnance she inspired. In truth I should not have expressed myself thus, had I not been convinced of her falseness and her evil disposition. Moreover I had the satisfaction of perceiving that Du Fau had not heard a single word of what I had said.

He began to talk as if to himself.

“Whether I call on her or not it is all the same. For six weeks I have visited nowhere without meeting her. Houses, which I have not entered for many years, I now return to, why I know not ! Queer houses too ! ”

Unable to comprehend the lure which drew him, I left him there, standing in front of the open door. That Du Fau, who had loathed Madame Cère when she was beautiful, that he, who had repulsed her advances when she was in her prime, should seek her now that she was old and a victim of drugs, must result from a deterioration which I had not expected in my friend. Such an uncommon vagary I should have declared impossible if in the obscure domain of sensual pathology one could ever be sure of anything.

A month later, I left Paris without an opportunity of again meeting Paul Du Fau. After spending a few days in Brittany, I went to stay with my cousin B—— at Trouville. Her children were there with her. The first week of my visit to the Chalet des Alcyons was spent in giving lessons in water-colours to my nieces, in teaching my nephews to fence and in hearing my cousin play Wagner.

On Sunday morning I went with the family as far as the church, and while they were at mass I wandered about the town. Walking along the beach road lined with toy stalls and curiosity shops, I saw in front of me Madame Cère. Languid, solitary and forlorn, she was going down to the bathing-huts. The dragging of her feet suggested that her shoes were down at heel. Her frock, torn and crumpled, seemed to be dropping off her body. For one moment she looked round. Her hollow vacant eyes and her hanging lip positively alarmed me. While the women cast sidelong glances at her, she went on her way dismal and indifferent.

Obviously the poor woman was poisoned with morphia. At the end of the street she stopped before the shop window of Madame Guillot, and, with her long thin hand, began to feel the laces. Her eager glance at that moment reminded me of the tattle that circulated about her in the big shops. The stout Madame Guillot, who was showing out some customers, appeared at the door. And Madame Cère, putting down the lace, resumed her dreary walk to the beach.

“You haven’t bought anything for a long time ! What a bad customer you are !” cried Madame Guillot as she saw me. Come, look at some buckles

and fans which the young ladies, your nieces, thought very pretty. How good looking they grow, the young ladies ! ”

Then she looked at the disappearing form of Madame Cère and shook her head as if to say :

“ Isn’t it unfortunate ? Eh ? ”

I had to buy some paste buckles for my nieces. While my purchase was being wrapped up, through the shop window I saw Du Fau going down to the beach. He was walking very quickly with an anxious air. In the manner of agitated persons, he was biting his nails, which enabled me to observe that he wore the amethyst on his finger.

I was surprised to see him, especially as he said he was going to Dinard. He has a chalet there and harriers. When I fetched my cousin from church, I asked her whether she knew that Du Fau was at Trouville. She nodded. Then, slightly embarrassed :

“ Our poor friend is quite absurd. He is tied to that woman. And really. . . ”

She paused and then resumed :

“ It is he who pursues her. I can’t understand it.”

Du Fau was indeed pursuing her. In a few days

I had certain proof of it. I saw him constantly dogging the steps of Madame Cère and of Monsieur Cère, whom no one knows whether to regard as a stupid or an obliging husband. His dulness saves him and makes it possible to give him the benefit of the doubt. Once this woman was blindly set on attracting Du Fau, who is a useful friend in households ostentatious but not wealthy. But Du Fau made no attempt to conceal his dislike for her. He used to say in her presence: "An artificially beautiful woman is more detestable than an ugly woman. The latter may offer pleasant surprises. The other is naught but a fruit filled with ashes." On that occasion the strength of Du Fau's feeling imparted to its expression a biblical elevation of style. Now Madame Cère ignored him. Grown indifferent to men, she now cared only for her De Pravaz syringe \* and her friend, the Countess V——. These two women were inseparable; and the innocence of their friendship was thought to be rendered possible by the circumstance that they were both moribund. Nevertheless Du Fau was always with them on their excursions. One day I saw him carrying Monsieur Cère's heavy field-glasses slung over his shoulders. He persuaded Madame Cère to go out in a boat with

\* A morphia syringe.



him, and the whole beach fixed its eyes upon them with an unholy glee.

Naturally enough while he was in such an ignominious position I had little desire for his society. And as he was perpetually in a kind of somnambulistic state, I quitted Trouville without having exchanged a dozen words with my unhappy friend, whom I left a prey to the Cères and Countess V——.

One evening in Paris I met him again. It was at the house of his friends and neighbours, the N——'s, who are charming hosts. In the arrangement of their beautiful house in the Avenue Kléber, I recognized the excellent taste of Madame N—— united to that of Du Fau, and blending very harmoniously together. There were not many present, only a few friends. As in the past, Paul Du Fau displayed that turn of wit peculiar to him, that refined delicacy touched with a flavour of the most picturesque brutality. Madame N—— is intelligent and the conversation in her salon is quite good. Nevertheless when I first entered the talk was extremely commonplace. A magistrate, Monsieur le Conseiller Nicolas, was relating at length that hackneyed tale of the sentry box, wherein every sentinel in turn committed suicide, and which had to be pulled down in order to put a stop to this

novel epidemic. After which Madame N—— asked me if I believed in talismans. Monsieur le Conseiller Nicolas relieved my embarrassment by saying that I, being an unbeliever, was bound to be superstitious.

“You are quite right,” replied Madame N——. “He believes neither in God nor the devil. And he adores stories of the other world.”

I looked at this charming woman while she was speaking ; and I admired the unobtrusive grace of her cheeks, her neck and her shoulders. Her whole person gives one the idea of something rare and precious. I do not know what Du Fau thinks of Madame N——’s foot. To me it is beautiful.

Paul Du Fau came and shook hands with me. I noticed that he was no longer wearing his ring.

“What have you done with your amethyst ? ”

“I have lost it.”

“What ! An intaglio more beautiful than any in Rome and Naples ! You have lost it ? ”

Without giving him time to reply, N——, who is always at his side, exclaimed :

“Yes, it is a curious story. He has lost his amethyst.”

N—— is an excellent fellow, very self confident,

a trifle diffuse, and of a simplicity which sometimes provokes a smile. Noisily he called to his wife :

“ Marthe, my love, here is some one who has not yet heard that Du Fau has lost his amethyst.”

And turning to me :

“ Why, it is quite a story. Would you believe it ? Our friend had absolutely forsaken us. I used to say to my wife : ‘ What have you done to Du Fau ? ’ She would reply : ‘ What have I done ? Why nothing, my love.’ It was incomprehensible. But our astonishment doubled when we heard that he was always with that poor Madame Cère.”

Madame N—— interrupted her husband :

“ What has that got to do with it ? ”

But N—— insisted :

“ Excuse me, my love ! But I must mention it in order to explain the history of the amethyst. Well, this summer our friend Du Fau refused to come with us to the country as he had been in the habit of doing. My wife and I had given him a very hearty invitation. But he remained at Trouville, with his cousin de Maureil, in very dull society.”

Madame N—— protested.

“ It is true,” repeated N——, “ very dull society. He spent his time going out in a boat with Madame Cère.”

Du Fau calmly observed that there was not one word of truth in what N—— was saying. The latter putting his hand on his friend's shoulder said:

“I defy you to contradict me.”

And he finished his story.

“Day and night Du Fau went out with Madame Cère, or with her ghost, for it is said that Madame Cère is nothing but the ghost of her former self. Cère stayed on the beach with his field-glasses. During one of these excursions Du Fau lost his amethyst. After this mischance he declined to stay a day longer at Trouville. He left the place without bidding anyone farewell, took train and came to us, at Les Eyzies, where we had given up expecting him. It was two o'clock in the morning. ‘Here I am,’ he said calmly. There's eccentricity for you !”

“And the amethyst ?” I asked.

“It is true,” replied Du Fau, “that it fell into the sea. It lies buried in the sand. At least no fisherman has in the traditional manner brought it to land in the belly of a fish.”

A few days later, I paid one of my customary visits to Hendel in the Rue de Chateaudun. And I inquired whether he had not some curiosity with which to tempt me. He knows that I am so old fashioned

as to collect ancient bronzes and marbles. Silently he opened a glass case, reserved for amateurs, and took out a little Egyptian scribe in *pietra dura*, of primitive workmanship, a veritable treasure! When I heard its price, I myself put it back, not without a longing glance. Then in the case I perceived the imprint in wax of the intaglio I had so much admired at Du Fau's. I recognized the nymph, the pillar, the laurel. It was beyond the possibility of a doubt.

"Did you ever have the gem?" I asked Hendel.

"Yes, I sold it last year."

"A fine gem! Where did you get it?"

"It came from the collection of Mark Delion, the financier, who five years ago committed suicide on account of a society lady. . . . Madame . . . perhaps you know her . . . Madame Cère.

# LA SIGNORA CHIARA

TO UGO OJETTI

## LA SIGNORA CHIARA



PROFESSOR GIACOMO TEDESCHI of Naples is a doctor well known in the town. His house, which is decidedly odoriferous, is near the Incoronata. It is frequented by all kinds of persons, and particularly by the beautiful maidens who at Santa Lucia traffic in the harvest of the sea. He sells drugs for all maladies ; he is not above extracting a decayed tooth ; he is an adept, the day after a festival, at sewing up the gaping skin of a bravo ; and he knows how to use the long shore dialect interspersed with academical Latin so as to impart confidence to his patients laid out on the longest, the most rickety, the most creaking and the dirtiest operating-chair to be found in any seaport in the universe. He is a man of slender build, of full face, with little green eyes and a long nose overhanging a thin-lipped mouth ; his round shoulders, his pot belly and his thin legs recall the pantaloons of bygone times.



Late in life Giacomo married the young Chiara Mammi, daughter of an old convict highly esteemed in Naples, who, having become a baker on the Borgo di Santo, died lamented by the whole town. Ripened by the sun which gilds the grapes of Torre and the oranges of Sorrento, the beauty of Chiara blossomed in glowing splendour.

Professor Giacomo Tedeschi held the fitting belief that his wife was as virtuous as she was beautiful. Moreover he knew how strong is the sentiment of feminine honour in a bandit's family. But he was a doctor and aware of the disturbances and weaknesses to which the nature of woman is liable. He felt some anxiety when Ascanio Ranieri of Milan, who had set up as ladies' tailor on the Piazza dei Martiri, took to visiting his house. Ascanio was young, handsome and always smiling. The daughter of the heroic Mammi, the patriot baker, was certainly too good a Neapolitan to forget her duty with a townsman of Milan. Nevertheless Ascanio showed a preference for visiting the house near the Incoronata during the doctor's absence, and the signora willingly received him unchaperoned.

One day when the Professor came home earlier than he was expected, he surprised Ascanio on his knees to Chiara. While the signora departed with

the measured step of a goddess, Ascanio rose to his feet.

Giacomo Tedeschi approached him with every sign of the most anxious solicitude.

“My friend, I see that you are ill. You did well to come to see me. I am a doctor and vowed to the relief of human suffering. You are in pain, do not deny it. Your face is aflame. It is headache, an acute headache, doubtless. How wise of you to come to see me. You were waiting for me impatiently, I am sure. Yes, a terrible headache. While uttering these words, the old man, strong as a Sabine bull, was pushing Ascanio into his consulting-room and forcing him to recline in that famous operating-chair, which for forty years had borne the weight of suffering Neapolitans.

Then holding him inexorably there :

“I see what it is, your tooth is aching. That’s it ! Yes, your toothache is very bad.”

He took from a case an enormous dentist’s forceps, prised open his capacious mouth and with a turn of the forceps pulled out a tooth.

Ascanio fled, spitting blood from his streaming jaw, and Professor Giacomo Tedeschi shrieked after him with savage joy :

“A fine tooth ! a fine, a very fine tooth ! . . .”



## UPRIGHT JUDGES

TO MADAME MARCELLE TINAYRE

## UPRIGHT JUDGES



UPRIGHT judges I have indeed seen," said Jean Marteau. "It was in a picture. I had gone to Belgium to escape from an inquisitive magistrate, who insisted that I had conspired with anarchists. I did not know my accomplices and my accomplices did not know me. But that presented no difficulty to the magistrate. Nothing embarrassed him. Though he was perpetually weighing evidence his sense of values remained undeveloped. His persistence terrified me. I went to Belgium and stopped at Antwerp, where I became a grocer's assistant. In the picture gallery one Sunday I saw two upright judges in a painting by Mabuse. They are of a type now extinct. I mean the type of peripatetic judges who used to travel at a jog-trot on their ambling nags. Foot soldiers, armed with lances and partisans form their escort. Bearded and hairy, these two judges, like the kings in old Flemish bibles, wear an eccentric

yet magnificent headdress suggestive at once of a nightcap and a diadem. Their brocaded robes are richly adorned. The old master has succeeded in imparting to them a grave, calm and gentle air. Their horses are as mild and calm as they. Nevertheless these two judges differed both in character and in point of view. You can see that at once. One holds a paper in his hand and with his finger points to the text. The other, his left hand on the pommel of his saddle, is raising his right with more benevolence than authority. Between thumb and forefinger he appears to be holding an impalpable powder. And the hand thus carefully posed for this gesture suggests an intellect cautious and subtle. They are upright both of them, but obviously the first adheres to the letter, the second to the spirit. Leaning against the rail which separates them from the public, I listened to their talk. Said the first judge :

“ I hold to the written word. The first law was written on stone as a sign that it would last as long as the world.”

The other judge made answer :

“ Every law is out of date as soon as it is written. For the hand of the scribe is slow, the mind of man is nimble and his destiny is uncertain.”

Then these two excellent old men pursued their sententious discussion :

*First judge.* The law is stable.

*Second judge.* The law is never fixed.

*First judge.* Coming forth from God it is immutable.

*Second judge.* Proceeding naturally from society it is dependent upon the changing conditions of this life.

*First judge.* It is the will of God, which changeth not.

*Second judge.* It is the will of man which changeth ever.

*First judge.* It was before man and is superior to him.

*Second judge.* It is of man, infirm as he, and like unto him capable of perfection.

*First judge.* Judge, open thy book and read what is written therein. For it is God who dictated to such as believed in Him: *Sic locutus est patribus nostris, Abraham et semini ejus in sæcula.*

*Second judge.* That which is written by the dead will be erased by the living. Were it not so, the will of those who have passed away would impose itself upon those who yet survive ; and the dead would be the living and the living the dead.



*First judge.* To laws prescribed by the dead the living owe obedience. The quick and the dead are contemporary before God. Moses and Cyrus, Cæsar, Justinian and the Emperor of Almaïne yet reign over us. For in the sight of the Eternal One we are their contemporaries.

*Second judge.* The living owe obedience to the laws prescribed by the living. For our instruction in that which is permitted and that which is forbidden Zoroaster and Numa Pompilius rank below the cobbler of Saint Gudule.

*First judge.* The first laws were revealed to us by the Infinite Wisdom. The best laws are those which are nearest to that source.

*Second judge.* Do you not see that every day new laws are made and that Constitutions and codes differ according to time and place ?

*First judge.* New laws proceed from those that are ancient. They are the young branches of the same tree nourished by the same sap.

*Second judge.* From the ancient tree of the law there is distilled a bitter juice. Ceaselessly is the axe laid unto that tree.

*First judge.* It is not for the judge to inquire whether the laws are just, since they must necessarily be so. He has only to administer them justly.

*Second judge.* It is for us to inquire whether the law that we administer be just or unjust, because if we discover it to be unjust, it is possible for us to introduce some modification into the application we are forced to make of it.

*First judge.* The criticism of laws is not compatible with the respect we owe to them.

*Second judge.* If we do not recognize the severity of the law how can we temper it ?

*First judge.* We are judges, not legislators or philosophers.

*Second judge.* We are men.

*First judge.* A man is incapable of judging men. A judge, when he goes to the seat of justice, puts off his humanity. He assumes divinity and no longer tastes either joy or sorrow.

*Second judge.* When justice is not dispensed with sympathy it becomes the cruellest injustice.

*First judge.* Justice is perfect when it is literal.

*Second judge.* When justice is not spiritual it is absurd.

*First judge.* The principle of laws is divine and the consequences which flow from them are no less divine. But even if law were not wholly of God, if it were wholly of man, it would still be necessary

to administer it according to the letter. For the letter is fixed, the spirit is fleeting.

*Second judge.* Law is wholly of man. It was born foolish and cruel in the early glimmerings of human reason. But were it of divine essence, it should be followed according to the spirit not according to the letter, for the letter is dead and the spirit is living.

Having thus conversed, the two upright judges dismounted and with their escort approached the Tribunal, whither they must go, in order to render unto each man his due. Their horses, tied to a stake, under a great elm, conversed together. The first judge's horse spoke first :

"When horses inherit the earth," he said (and the earth will doubtless belong to them one day, for the horse is obviously the ultimate end and the final object of creation), "when the earth is the horse's and we are free to act as we will, we will live under laws like men and we will take delight in imprisoning, hanging and breaking on the wheel our fellow creatures. We will be moral beings. It shall be proved by the prisons, the gibbets and the strapados which shall be erected in our towns. There shall be legislative horses. What do you think Roussin ? "

Roussin, who was the second judge's steed, replied

that in his opinion the horse was the king of creation and he confidently hoped that sooner or later his kingdom would come.

“And when we have built towns, Blanchet,” he added, “we must, as you say, establish a system of police in them. In those days I would have the laws of horses equine, that is favourable to horses and for the equine weal.”

“What do you mean by that, Roussin ?” asked Blanchet.

“My meaning is the natural one. I demand that the law shall secure for each his share of corn and his place in the stable, and that each be permitted to love as he will during the season. For there is a time for everything. In short I would have the laws of horses in conformity with nature.”

“I hope,” replied Blanchet, “that the ideas of our legislators will be more elevated than yours, Blanchet. They will make laws according as they are inspired by that celestial horse who has created all horses. He is all good since he is all powerful. Power and goodness are his attributes. He fore-ordained his creatures to endure the bit, to drag at the halter, to feel the spur and to die beneath the whip. You talk of love, comrade ; he ordained that many of us should be made geldings. It is his

command. The laws must maintain this worshipful behest.

“ But are you quite sure, my friend,” inquired Roussin, “ that these evils proceed from the celestial horse that has created us, and not merely from man his inferior creation ? ”

“ Men are the ministers and the angels of the celestial horse,” replied Blanchet. “ His will is manifest in everything that happens. His will is good. Since he wishes us ill, it must be that ill is good. If therefore the law is to do us good it must make us suffer. And in the Empire of horses we shall be constrained and tortured in every way, by means of edicts, decrees, sentences, judgments and ordinances in order to please the heavenly horse.”

“ Roussin,” added Blanchet, “ you must have the head of an ass not to understand that the horse was brought into the world to suffer, and that if he does not suffer he fails to fulfil his destiny and that from happy horses the heavenly horse turns away his face.”

# THE OCEAN CHRIST

TO IVAN STRANNIK

## THE OCEAN CHRIST



**T**HAT year many of the fishers of Saint-Valéry had been drowned at sea. Their bodies were found on the beach cast up by the waves with the wreckage of their boats ; and for nine days, up the steep road leading to the church were to be seen coffins borne by hand and followed by widows, who were weeping beneath their great black-hooded cloaks, like women in the Bible.

Thus were the skipper Jean Lenoel and his son Désiré laid in the great nave, beneath the vaulted roof from which they had once hung a ship in full rigging as an offering to Our Lady. They were righteous men and God-fearing. Monsieur Guillaume Truphème, priest of Saint-Valéry, having pronounced the Absolution, said in a tearful voice :

“Never were laid in consecrated ground there to await the judgment of God better men and better Christians than Jean Lenoël and his son Désiré.”



And while barques and their skippers perished near the coast, in the high seas great vessels foundered. Not a day passed that the ocean did not bring in some flotsam of wreck. Now one morning some children who were steering a boat saw a figure lying on the sea. It was a figure of Jesus Christ, life-size, carved in wood, painted in natural colouring, and looking as if it were very old. The Good Lord was floating upon the sea with arms outstretched. The children towed the figure ashore and brought it up into Saint-Valéry. The head was encircled with the crown of thorns. The feet and hands were pierced. But the nails were missing as well as the cross. The arms were still outstretched ready for sacrifice and blessing, just as He appeared to Joseph of Arimathea and the holy women when they were burying him.

The children gave it to Monsieur le Curé Truphème, who said to them :

“ This image of the Saviour is of ancient workmanship. He who made it must have died long ago. Although to-day in the shops of Amiens and Paris excellent statues are sold for a hundred francs and more, we must admit that the earlier sculptors were not without merit. But what delights me most is the thought that if Jesus Christ be thus come with

open arms to Saint-Valéry, it is in order to bless the parish, which has been so cruelly tried, and in order to announce that he has compassion on the poor folk who go a-fishing at the risk of their lives. He is the God who walked upon the sea and blessed the nets of Cephas."

And Monsieur le Curé Truphème, having had the Christ placed in the church on the cloth of the high altar, went off to order from the carpenter Lemerre a beautiful cross in heart of oak.

When it was made, the Saviour was nailed to it with brand new nails, and it was erected in the nave above the churchwarden's pew.

Then it was noticed that His eyes were filled with mercy and seemed to glisten with tears of heavenly pity.

One of the churchwardens, who was present at the putting up of the crucifix, fancied he saw tears streaming down the divine face. The next morning when Monsieur le Curé with a choir-boy entered the church to say his mass, he was astonished to find the cross above the churchwarden's pew empty and the Christ lying upon the altar.

As soon as he had celebrated the divine sacrifice he had the carpenter called and asked him why he had taken the Christ down from his cross. But the

carpenter replied that he had not touched it. Then, after having questioned the beadle and the sidesmen, Monsieur Truphème made certain that no one had entered the church since the crucifix had been placed over the churchwarden's pew.

Thereupon he felt that these things were miraculous, and he meditated upon them discreetly. The following Sunday in his exhortation he spoke of them to his parishioners, and he called upon them to contribute by their gifts to the erection of a new cross more beautiful than the first and more worthy to bear the Redeemer of the world.

The poor fishers of Saint-Valéry gave as much money as they could and the widows brought their wedding-rings. Wherefore Monsieur Truphème was able to go at once to Abbeville and to order a cross of ebony, highly polished and surmounted by a scroll with the inscription I.N.R.I. in letters of gold. Two months later it was erected in the place of the former and the Christ was nailed to it between the lance and the sponge.

But Jesus left this cross as He had left the other; and as soon as night fell He went and stretched Himself upon the altar.

Monsieur le Curé, when he found Him there in the morning, fell on his knees and prayed for a long while.

The fame of this miracle spread throughout the neighbourhood, and the ladies of Amiens made a collection for the Christ of Saint-Valéry. Monsieur Truphème received money and jewels from Paris, and the wife of the Minister of Marine, Madame Hyde de Neuville, sent him a heart of diamonds. Of all these treasures, in the space of two years, a goldsmith of La Rue St. Sulpice, fashioned a cross of gold and precious stones which was set up with great pomp in the church of Saint-Valéry on the second Sunday after Easter in the year 18—. But He who had not refused the cross of sorrow, fled from this cross of gold and again stretched Himself upon the white linen of the altar.

For fear of offending Him, He was left there this time ; and He had lain upon the altar for more than two years, when Pierre, son of Pierre Caillou, came to tell Monsieur le Curé Truphème that he had found the true cross of Our Lord on the beach.

Pierre was an innocent ; and, because he had not sense enough to earn a livelihood, people gave him bread out of charity, he was liked because he never did any harm. But he wandered in his talk and no one listened to him.

Nevertheless Monsieur Truphème, who had never

ceased meditating on the Ocean Christ, was struck by what the poor imbecile had just said. With the beadle and two sidesmen he went to the spot, where the child said he had seen a cross, and there he found two planks studded with nails, which had long been washed by the sea and which did indeed form a cross.

They were the remains of some old shipwreck. On one of these boards could still be read two letters painted in black, a J and an L ; and there was no doubt that this was a fragment of Jean Lenoel's barque, he who with his son Désiré had been lost at sea five years before.

At the sight of this, the beadle and the sidesmen began to laugh at the innocent who had taken the broken planks of a boat for the cross of Jesus Christ. But Monsieur le Curé Truphème checked their merriment. He had meditated much and prayed long since the Ocean Christ had arrived among the fisherfolk, and the mystery of infinite charity began to dawn upon him. He knelt down upon the sand, repeated the prayer for the faithful departed, and then told the beadle and the sidesmen to carry the flotsam on their shoulders and to place it in the church. When this had been done he raised the Christ from the altar, placed it on the planks of the boat and him-

self nailed it to them, with the nails that the ocean had corroded.

By the priest's command, the very next day this cross took the place of the cross of gold and precious stones over the churchwarden's pew. The Ocean Christ has never left it. He has chosen to remain nailed to the planks on which men died invoking His name and that of His Mother. There, with parted lips, august and afflicted He seems to say :

“ My cross is made of all men's woes, for I am in truth the God of the poor and the heavy-laden.”



JEAN MARTEAU





# JEAN MARTEAU

## I

### A DREAM



HE talk fell on sleep and dreams.

Jean Marteau said that one dream had left an indelible impression on his mind.

“Was it a prophetic dream?” inquired Monsieur Goubin.

“In itself,” replied Jean Marteau, “the dream was not remarkable, not even for its incoherence. But its images presented themselves with a painful vividness which is quite unique. Nothing I ever experienced, nothing, was ever so real to me, so actual as the visions of this dream. In that lies its interest. It enabled me to understand the illusions of a mystic. Had I been less rational I should certainly have taken it to be an apocalypse and a revelation, and I should have derived therefrom

principles of conduct and a rule of life. I ought to tell you that I dreamed this dream under peculiar circumstances. It was in the spring of 1895; I was twenty. Having recently arrived in Paris I was in difficulties. That night I had lain down in a copse of the Versailles wood. I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. I suffered no pain. I was in a state of calm and ease, disturbed occasionally by a feeling of anxiety. It seemed to me as if I was neither asleep nor awake. A little girl, quite a little girl in a blue-hooded cape, and a white apron, was walking with crutches over a plain. With every step she took her crutches grew and raised her like stilts. They soon became higher than the poplars on the river's bank. A woman who *saw* my surprise said to me: "Don't you know that in the spring crutches grow? But there are times when the size increases with alarming rapidity."

A man whose face I could not see, added: "It is the climacteric hour."

Then with a soft and mysterious sound which alarmed me, all around me the grass began to grow. I arose and reached a plain covered with wan plants, cottony and dead. There I met Vernaux, who was my only friend in Paris, where he lived as penuriously as I. Long we walked side by side in silence. In

the sky the stars, huge and rayless, were like discs of pale gold.

I knew the cause of this appearance and I explained it to Vernaux: "It is an optical phenomenon," I said, "our eyes are out of focus."

And with infinite care and minuteness I engaged in a demonstration which chiefly turned upon the exact correspondence between the human eye and the astronomical telescope. While I was reasoning thus, Vernaux found on the ground some leaden-coloured grass, an enormous black hat, boat shaped, with a brim, a band of gold braid and a diamond buckle. Putting it on his head, he said: "It is the lord mayor's hat." "Obviously," I replied, and I resumed my demonstration. So arduous was it that the perspiration dropped from my forehead. I was always losing the thread and beginning again vaguely with the phrase: "The great saurians who swam in the tepid waters of the primitive ocean had eyes constructed like a telescope. . . ."

I continued until I perceived that Vernaux had disappeared. It was not long before I found him again in a hollow. He was on a spit, roasting over a brushwood fire. Indians with their hair tied on the tops of their heads were basting him with a long-handled spoon and were turning the spit. In

a clear voice Vernaux said to me : "Mélanie has been here."

Then only did I perceive that he had the head and neck of a chicken. But all I could think of was how to find Mélanie, who, by a sudden inspiration I knew to be the most beautiful of women. I ran, and, having reached the edge of a wood, by the moonlight I saw a white form fleeting before me. Hair of a glorious red fell over her neck. A silver light caressed her shoulders, a blue shadow filled the hollow in the middle of her gleaming back ; and, as she ran, her dimples in their rise and fall seemed to smile with a divine smile. I distinctly saw the azure shadow on her leg augment or diminish according to the motion of the limb. I noticed also the pink soles of her feet. Long did I pursue her without fatigue and with a step light as the flight of a bird. But a dark shadow veiled her, and her perpetual flight led me into a path so narrow that it was blocked completely by a little iron stove. It was one of those stoves with long bent pipes which are used in studios. It was at a white heat. The door was incandescent and all around the metal was red hot. A cat with its hair all shorn was sitting on it and looking at me. As I drew near I perceived through the cracks in its scorched skin an ardent mass of liquid

metal which filled its body. It was miauling, and I understood that it was asking for water. In order to find some, I descended the slope on which was a cool wood of birch and ash trees. A stream ran through it at the bottom of a ravine. But I could not approach it on account of the blocks of sandstone and tufts of dwarf oaks by which it was overhung. As I slipped on a mossy stone my left arm came away from my shoulder without causing a wound or any pain. I took it in my right hand; it was cold and numb; its touch made me shudder. I reflected that now I was in danger of losing it and how wearisome a drudgery it would be for the rest of my life to have to watch ceaselessly over it. I resolved to order an ebony box wherein I might keep it when it was not in use. As it was very cold in this damp hollow I quitted it by a rustic path which led me on to a wind-swept plateau, where all the trees were bent as if in sorrow. There along a yellow road a procession was passing. It was countrified and humble, just like the Rogation procession in the village of Brécé, which our Master, Monsieur Bergeret, knows so well. There was nothing singular about the clergy, the confraternities, or the faithful except that no one had any feet and that they all moved upon little wheels. Under the canopy I

recognized Monsieur l'Abbé Lantaigne, who had become village priest and was weeping tears of blood. I wanted to call out to him: "I am *ministre plenipotentiaire*." But my voice choked in my throat, and a great shadow coming down upon me caused me to raise my head. It was one of the little lame girl's crutches. They had now ascended into the sky some thousand metres, and I perceived the child like a little black spot against the moon. The stars had grown still larger and paler, and among them I distinguished three planets, the spherical form of which was quite visible to the eye. I even thought I could recognize spots on their surface. But these spots did not correspond to the drawings of those on Mars, Jupiter and Saturn which I had once seen in astronomical books.

My friend Vernaux having come up, I asked him whether he could not see the canals on the planet Mars. "The Ministry is defeated," he said.

He bore no sign of the spit I had seen transfixing him, but he still had a chicken's head and neck, and he was dripping with gravy. I felt an uncontrollable desire to demonstrate my optical theory to him and to resume my argument where I had left it. "The great saurians," I said, "which swam in the tepid

waters of the primitive ocean had eyes constructed like a telescope. . . .”

Instead of listening to me, he went up to a reading-desk, which was there in the field, opened an anti-phonyary and began to crow like a cock.

Out of all patience, I turned my back on him and jumped into a tram that was passing. Inside I found a vast dining-hall, like those in great hotels or on board Atlantic liners. It was all flowers and glass. As far as one could see there were seated at table women in low frocks and men in evening dress in front of candelabra and crystal chandeliers forming an infinite vista of light. A steward came round with meat to which I helped myself. But it emitted a disgusting odour and it made me feel sick before I tasted it. Besides *I was not hungry*. The diners left the table before I had swallowed a mouthful. While the servants were taking away the candles Vernaux came up to me and said: “You did not notice the lady in the low-necked dress who was sitting next you. It was Mélanie. Look.”

And through the door he pointed to shoulders flooded with a white light, out in the darkness under the trees. I leapt out, I rushed in pursuit of the charming form. This time I caught it up, I touched it. For one moment I felt a delicious throbbing



beneath my fingers. But she slipped from my arms and I was embracing briars.

That was my dream.

“Truly your dream was sad,” said Monsieur Bergeret, to quote the simple Stratonice :

“‘A vision of oneself may arouse no little disgust.’”

## II

### THE LAW IS DEAD BUT THE JUDGE IS LIVING



FEW days later, said Jean Marteau, I happened to be lying in a thicket of the Bois de Vincennes. I had eaten nothing for thirty-six hours.

Monsieur Goubin wiped his eyeglasses. His eyes were kind but his glance was keen.

He looked hard at Jean Marteau and said to him reproachfully :

“What ? Again you had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours ?”

“Again,” replied Jean Marteau, “I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. But I was wrong. One ought not to go without food. It is not right. Hunger should be a crime like vagrancy. But as a matter of fact the two offences are regarded as one and the same ; article 269 inflicts from three to six months’ imprisonment on those who lack

means of subsistence. Vagrancy, according to the code, is the condition of vagrants, of vagabonds, persons without any fixed dwelling or means of subsistence, who exercise no specific trade or profession. They are great criminals."

"It is curious," said Monsieur Bergeret, "that the state of vagrancy, punishable by six months' imprisonment and ten years' police supervision, is precisely the same as that in which the good St. Francis placed his companions at St. Mary of the Angels and the daughters of St. Clare. If St. Francis of Assisi and St. Anthony of Padua came to preach in Paris to-day they would run great risk of being clapped into the prison van and carried off to the police court. Not that I mean to denounce to the authorities the mendicant monks who now swarm among us. They possess means of livelihood; they exercise all manner of trades."

"They are respectable because they are rich," said Jean Marteau. "It is only the poor who are forbidden to beg. Had I been discovered beneath my tree I should have been thrown into prison and that would have been justice. Possessing nothing, I was assumed to be the enemy of property; and it is just to defend property against its enemies. The august task of the judge is to assure to every

man that which belongs to him, to the rich his wealth, to the poor his poverty."

"I have reflected on the philosophy of law," said Monsieur Bergeret, "and I have perceived that the whole structure of social justice rests upon two axioms: robbery is to be condemned: the result of robbery is to be respected. These are the principles which assure the security of individuals and maintain order in the State. If one of these tutelary principles were to be disregarded the whole of society would fall to pieces. They were established in the beginning of time. A chief clothed in bearskin, armed with an axe of flint and with a sword of bronze, returned with his comrades to the stone entrenchments, wherein were enclosed the children of the tribe and the troops of women and of reindeer. They brought back with them youths and maidens from the neighbouring tribe and stones fallen from the sky, which were precious because out of them could be made swords which would not bend. The chief ascended a hillock in the middle of the enclosure and said: 'These slaves and this iron, which I have taken from men weak and contemptible are mine. Whosoever shall lay hands upon them shall be struck down by my axe.' Such is the origin of law. Its spirit is ancient and barbarous. And it is

because justice is the ratification of all injustice that it reassures every one.

“A judge may be benevolent, for men are not all bad ; the law cannot be benevolent because it is anterior to all ideas of benevolence. The changes which have been introduced into it down the ages have not altered its original character. Jurists have rendered it subtle, but they have left it barbaric. Its very ferocity causes it to be respected and regarded as august. Men are given to worship malevolent gods, and that which is not cruel seems to them not worth their adoration. The judged believe in the justice of laws. Their morality is that of the judges ; both one and the other believe that a punished action is penal. In the police court or at the assizes I have often been touched to see how the accused and the judge agree perfectly in their ideas of good and evil. They have the same prejudices and a common morality.”

“It cannot be otherwise,” said Jean Marteau. “A poor creature who has stolen from a shop window a sausage or a pair of shoes has not on that account looked deeply and boldly into the very origin of law and the foundation of justice. And those who like ourselves are not afraid to behold in the origin of Codes a sanction

of violence and iniquity, are incapable of stealing a halfpenny."

"But after all," said Monsieur Goubin, "there are just laws."

"Do you think so ?" inquired Jean Marteau.

"Monsieur Goubin is right," said Monsieur Bergeret. "There are just laws. But law having been instituted for the defence of society, in its spirit cannot be more equitable than that society. As long as society is founded upon injustice the function of laws will be to defend and maintain that injustice. And the more unjust they are the worthier of respect they will appear. Notice also that, ancient as most of them are, they do not exactly represent present unrighteousness but past unrighteousnesses which is ruder and crasser. They are monuments of the Dark Ages which have lingered on into brighter days."

"But they are being improved," said Monsieur Goubin.

"They are being improved," said Monsieur Bergeret. "The Chamber and the Senate work at them when they have nothing else to do. But the heart of them remains ; and it is bitter. To be frank, I should not greatly fear bad laws if they were administered by good judges. The law is unbending, it is said, I do not believe it. There is no text which may not

receive various interpretations. The law is dead. The magistrate is living: he possesses this great advantage over the law. Unfortunately he seldom uses it. Generally he schools himself to be colder, more insensible, more dead than the code he applies. He is not human; he knows no pity. In him the caste spirit stifles all human sympathy.

“I am only speaking now of honest judges.”

“They are in the majority,” said Monsieur Goubin.

“They are in the majority,” replied Monsieur Bergeret, “if we refer to common honesty and everyday morals. But is an approach to common honesty sufficient equipment for a man who, without falling into error or abuse has to wield the enormous power of punishing? A good judge should possess at once a kind heart and a philosophic mind. That is much to ask from a man who has his way to make and is determined to win advancement in his profession. Leaving out of account the fact that if he displays a morality superior to that of his day he will be hated by his fellows and will arouse universal indignation. For we condemn as immoral all morality which is not our own. All who have introduced any novel goodness into the world have met with the scorn of honest folk. That is what happened to President Magnaud.

“ I have his judgments here, collected in a little volume with commentaries by Henri Leyret. When these judgments were pronounced they provoked the indignation of austere magistrates and virtuous legislators. They are stamped with noble thoughts and tender kindness. They are full of pity, they are human, they are virtuous. In the Law Courts President Magnaud was thought not to have a judicial mind, and the friends of Monsieur Méline accused him of lacking respect for property. And it is true that the considerations on which the judgments of President Magnaud repose are singular, for at every line one meets the thoughts of an independent mind and the sentiments of a generous heart.”

Taking from the table a little crimson volume, Monsieur Bergeret turned over the pages and read :

*“ Honesty and delicacy are two virtues infinitely easier to practise when one lacks nothing than when one is destitute of everything.”*

*“ That which cannot be avoided ought not to be punished.”*

*“ In order to judge equitably the crime of the poor the judge should for the moment forget his own well-*



*being, in order as far as possible to place himself in the sad situation of a being whom every one has deserted."*

*"In his interpretation of the law the judge should not merely bear in mind the special case which is submitted to him, he should take into consideration the wider consequences for good or for evil which his sentence may involve."*

*"It is the workman alone who produces and who risks his health or his life for the exclusive profit of his master, who endangers nothing but his capital."*

"I have quoted almost haphazard," added Monsieur Bergeret, closing the book. "These are novel words. They are the echo of a great soul."

MONSIEUR THOMAS



## MONSIEUR THOMAS



ONCE knew an austere judge. His name was Thomas de Maulan. He was a country gentleman. During the seven years ministry of Marshal MacMahon he had become a magistrate in the hope that one day he would administer justice in the king's name. He had principles which he believed to be unalterable, having never attempted to examine them. As soon as one examines a principle one discovers something beneath it and perceives that it was not a principle at all. Both his religious and his social principles Thomas de Maulan kept outside the range of his curiosity.

He was judge in the court of first instance in the little town of X——, where I was then living. His appearance inspired esteem and even a certain sympathy. His figure was tall, thin, and bony, his face was sallow. His extreme simplicity gave him a somewhat distinguished

air. He liked to be called Monsieur Thomas, not that he despised his social position, but because he considered himself too poor to support it. I knew enough of him to recognize that his appearance was not deceptive and that though weak in character and narrow in intelligence he had a noble soul. I discovered that he possessed high moral qualities. But, having had occasion to observe him in the fulfilment of his functions as examining magistrate and judge, I perceived that his very uprightness and his conception of duty rendered him cruel and sometimes completely deprived him of insight. His extreme piety caused him to be unconsciously obsessed by the ideas of sin and expiation, of crime and punishment; and it was obvious that in punishing criminals he experienced the agreeable sensation of purifying them. Human justice he regarded as a faint yet beautiful reflection of divine justice. In childhood he had been taught that suffering is good, that it is a merit in itself, a virtue, an expiation. This he believed firmly; and he held that suffering is the due of whomsoever has sinned. He loved to chastise. His punishments were the outcome of his kindness of his heart. Accustomed to give thanks to the God who, for his eternal salvation, afflicted

him with toothache and colic as a punishment for Adam's sin, he sentenced vagrants and vagabonds to imprisonment and reparation as one who bestows benefits. His legal philosophy was founded upon his catechism ; his pitilessness proceeded from his directness and simplicity of mind. One could not call him cruel. But not being sensual neither was he sensitive. He had no precise physical idea of human suffering. His conception of it was purely moral and dogmatic. There was something mystic in his preference for the system of solitary confinement, and it was not without a certain joyfulness of heart and eye that one day he showed me over a fine prison which had recently been built in his district : a white thing, clean, silent, terrible ; cells arranged in a circle, and the warder in the centre in an observation chamber. It looked like a laboratory constructed by lunatics for the manufacture of lunatics. And malevolent lunatics indeed are those inventors of the solitary system who in order to convert a wrongdoer into a moral being subject him to a régime which turns him into an imbecile or a savage. That was not the opinion of Monsieur Thomas. He gazed with silent satisfaction on those atrocious cells. At the back of his mind was the idea that the prisoner is never alone

since God is with him. And his calm, self-satisfied glance seemed to say: "Here I have brought five or six persons face to face with their Creator and Sovereign Judge. There is no more enviable fate in the world."

It fell to this magistrate's lot to conduct the inquiry in several cases, among others in that of a teacher. Lay and clerical education were then at open war. The republicans having denounced the ignorance and brutality of the priests, the clerical newspaper of the district accused a lay teacher of having made a child sit on a red-hot stove. Among the country aristocracy this accusation found credence. Revolting details were related and the common gossip aroused the attention of justice. Monsieur Thomas, who was an honest man, would never have listened to his passions, had he known them to be passions. But he regarded them as duties because they were religious. He believed it to be his duty to consider complaints urged against a godless school, and he failed to perceive his extreme eagerness to consider them. I must not omit to say that he conducted the inquiry with meticulous care and infinite trouble. He conducted it according to the ordinary methods of justice, and he obtained wonderful results. Thirty school children, persistently in-

terrogated, replied at first badly, afterwards better, and finally very well. After a month's examination, they replied so well that they all gave the same answer. The thirty depositions agreed, they were identical, literally identical, and these children who on the first day said they had seen nothing, now declared with one unflinching voice, employing exactly the same words, that their little schoolfellow had been seated bare-skinned, on a red-hot stove. Monsieur le Juge Thomas was congratulating himself on so satisfactory a result, when the teacher proved irrefutably that there had never been a stove in the school. Then Monsieur Thomas began to suspect that the children were lying. But what he never perceived was that he himself had unwittingly dictated their evidence and taught it to them by heart.

The prosecution was nonsuited. The teacher was dismissed the court after having been severely reprimanded by the judge, who strongly urged him in the future to restrain his brutal instincts. Outside his deserted school the priest's scholars made a hullabaloo. And when he went out he was greeted with cries of "Ha ! ha ! *Grille-Cul* (Roast-back) " ; and stones were thrown at him. The Inspector of Primary Schools being informed of the state of



affairs, drew up a report stating that this teacher had no authority over his pupils and concluding that his immediate transference to another school would be advisable. He was sent to a village where a dialect was spoken which he did not understand. Even there he was called *Grille-Cul*. It was the only French term that was known there.

During my intercourse with Monsieur Thomas I learnt how all evidence given before an examining magistrate comes to be uniform in style. He received me in his room whilst with the assistance of his clerk he was examining a witness. I was about to withdraw, but he begged me to remain, saying that my presence would in no way interfere with a proper administration of justice.

I sat down in a corner and listened to the questions and answers :

“ Duval, did you see the accused at six o'clock in the evening ? ”

“ That is to say, Monsieur le Juge, my wife was at the window. Then she said to me : ‘ There’s Socquardot going by ! ’ ”

“ His presence under your window must have struck her as remarkable since she took the trouble to mention it to you particularly. And did the gait of the accused arouse your suspicion ? ”

"I will tell you how it was, Monsieur le Juge. My wife said to me: 'There's Socquardot going by!' Then I looked and said 'Why yes, it's Socquardot!'"

"Precisely! Clerk, write down: At six o'clock in the evening, the couple Duval saw the accused loafing round the house and walking with a suspicious gait."

Monsieur Thomas put a few more questions to the witness, who was a day labourer by occupation: he received replies and dictated to his clerk their translation into judge's jargon. Then the witness listened to the reading of his evidence, signed it, bowed and withdrew.

"Why," I asked, "do you not record the evidence as it is given you instead of translating it into words never used by the witness?"

Monsieur Thomas gazed at me with astonishment and replied calmly:

"I do not understand your meaning. I record the evidence as faithfully as possible. Every magistrate does. And in all the law reports there is not a single instance of evidence having been altered or distorted by a judge. If, in conformity with the invariable custom of my colleagues, I modify the exact terms used by the witnesses, it is because such

witnesses as this Duval, whom you have just heard, express themselves badly, and it would be derogatory to the dignity of justice to record incorrect, low and frequently gross expressions when there is no point in doing so. But, my dear sir, I think you fail to realize the conditions of a judicial examination. You must bear in mind the object of the magistrate in recording and classifying evidence. It is not for his own enlightenment alone but for that of the tribunal. It is not enough for him to see the case clearly, it must be equally clear to the minds of the judges. He has therefore to bring into prominence those charges which are sometimes concealed beneath the incoherent or diffuse story of a witness or confused by the ambiguous replies of the accused. If it were to be registered without order or method the most convicting evidence would lose its point and the majority of criminals would escape punishment "

"But surely," I asked, "a proceeding which consists in fixing the wandering thoughts of witnesses must be very dangerous."

"It would be if magistrates were not conscientious. But I never yet met a magistrate who was not deeply conscious of his duty. And yet I have sat on the Bench with Protestants, Deists and Jews. But they were magistrates."

“ At least you must admit, Monsieur Thomas, that your method possesses one disadvantage: when you read the written account of his evidence to the witness, he can hardly understand it, since you have introduced into it terms he is not accustomed to employ and the sense of which escapes him. What does your expression ‘suspicious gait’ convey to the mind of this labourer ? ”

He replied eagerly :

“ I have thought of that, and against this danger I have taken the greatest precautions. I will give you an example. A short time ago a witness of a somewhat limited intelligence and of whose morals I was ignorant, appeared not to attend to the clerk’s reading of the witness’s evidence. I had it read a second time, having urged the deponent to give it his sustained attention. By what I could see he did nothing of the kind. Then in order to bring home to him a more correct appreciation of his duty and his responsibility I made use of a stratagem. I dictated to the clerk one final phrase which contradicted everything that had gone before. I asked the witness to sign. Then, just as he was putting pen to paper, I seized his arm. ‘Wretch!’ I cried, ‘you are about to sign a declaration contrary to the one you have made and by so doing to commit a crime.’ ”

“ Well ! and what did he say to you ? ”

“ He replied piteously : ‘ Monsieur le Juge, you are cleverer than I, you must know best what I ought to write.’ ”

“ You see,” added Monsieur Thomas, “ that a judge anxious to fulfil his function well can guard himself against any danger of making a mistake. Believe me, my dear sir, judicial error is a myth ”

## A SERVANT'S THEFT

TO HENRI MONOD

## A SERVANT'S THEFT



ABOUT ten years ago, perhaps more, perhaps less, I visited a prison for women. It was an old chateau built in the reign of Henry IV; and its high slate roofs frowned down upon a dark little southern town on the banks of a river. The governor of the prison had reached the age of superannuation. He wore a black wig and a white beard. He was an extraordinary governor. He had ideas of his own and kindly feelings. He had no illusions concerning the morals of his three hundred prisoners, but he did not consider them to be greatly inferior to the morals of any three hundred women collected haphazard in a town.

"Here as elsewhere we have all sorts and conditions," his gentle, tired glance seemed to say.

As we crossed the courtyard, a long string of prisoners was returning from a silent walk and going back to the workshops. Many of them were old and



of hard, sullen aspect. My friend Dr. Cabane, who was with us, pointed out to me that nearly all these women had characteristic physical defects, that squinting was not uncommon among them, that they were degenerates and that nearly all were marked with the stigma of crime or at least of misdemeanour.

The governor slowly shook his head. I saw that he was disinclined to admit the theories of criminologists. He was evidently still convinced that in our social groups the guilty do not greatly differ from the innocent.

He took us to the workshops. We saw the bakers, the laundresses and the needlewomen at their tasks. The atmosphere of work and neatness imparted almost a cheerful air to the place. The governor treated the women kindly. The most stupid and the most perverse failed to exhaust his patience and his benevolence. His opinion was that one should excuse many things in those with whom one lives and that one should not ask too much even from misdemeanants and criminals. Unlike most persons, he did not require thieves and procuresses to be perfect because they were being punished. He had little faith in the moral efficacy of punishment, and he despaired of making his prison a school of virtue.

Being far from the belief that persons are rendered better by suffering, he spared these unfortunate women as much suffering as possible. I do not know whether he was religious, but for him the idea of expiation had no moral significance.

"I give my own interpretation to the rules," he said, "before applying them. I myself explain them to the prisoners. For example, one rule is absolute silence. Now if they were to be absolutely silent they would become mad or imbecile. That such is the object of the rule I cannot think for one moment. I say to them: the rule commands you to keep silent. What does that mean? It means that the wardresses must not hear you speak. If you are heard you will be punished; if you are not heard you will incur no reproach. You have not to give me an account of your thoughts. If your words make no more sound than your thoughts then your words are no affair of mine. Thus admonished, they endeavour to speak without, if one may say so, uttering any sound. They are not driven mad and the rule is kept."

I inquired whether his superiors approved of his interpretation of prison rules. He replied that inspectors frequently reproached him, and that then he conducted them to the outer gate and said:

"You see this railing ; it is of wood. If you confined men here, in a week's time there would not be one left. The idea of escaping never occurs to women. But it is prudent not to make them furious. As it is, prison life conduces neither to physical nor to moral health. I resign my governorship if you subject them to the torture of silence."

The infirmary and the dormitories, which we visited next, were in great white-washed halls which retained nothing of their ancient splendour except monumental mantelpieces in grey stone and black marble surmounted by pompous Virtues in high relief. The figure of Justice the work of some Italianate Flemish artist of about 1600, with bare neck and hip protruding through parted drapery, held suspended from one stout arm its unequally balanced scales, the plates of which clinked against each other like cymbals. This goddess seemed to menace with the point of her sword a little sickly form lying on an iron bedstead, upon which was a mattress as thin as a folded towel. It looked like a child.

"Well ! And are you better ?" asked Dr. Cabane.

"Oh ! yes, sir, much better."

And she smiled.

"Come then, you must be good and you will get well."

She looked at the doctor with wide eyes full of joy and hope.

"This little girl has been very ill," said Dr. Cabane.

And we passed on.

"What was her offence ? "

"It was no mere offence, it was a crime."

"Ah ! "

"Infanticide."

At the end of a long corridor, we entered an almost cheerful little room, furnished with cupboards and with windows which, devoid of iron bars, looked on to the country. Here a very pretty young woman was writing at a desk. Standing near her another with a good figure was looking for a key in a bunch hanging from her waist. I might have taken them for the governor's daughters. He informed me that they were two prisoners.

"Did you not notice that they wear prisoner's dress ? "

I had not noticed it, doubtless because they did not wear it like the others.

"Their dresses are better made and they wear smaller caps which show their hair."

"It is very difficult," replied the old governor, "to prevent a woman showing her hair when it is beautiful. These two are subject to the ordinary regulations and compelled to work."

"What are they doing?"

"One is keeper of the records and the other is librarian."

There was no need to ask: their offences were crimes of passion. The governor made no secret that he preferred criminals to misdemeanants.

"I know some criminals," he said, "who are as it were aloof from their crime. It was a flash in their life. They are capable of straightforwardness, courage and generosity. I could not say as much for my thieves. Their mediocre and commonplace wrongdoing is woven into the very tissue of their existence. They are incorrigible. And the baseness which was the cause of their misdemeanour reveals itself over and over again in their conduct. The penalty imposed on them is relatively light, and, as they have little sensibility either physical or moral, they generally bear it easily."

"But it does not follow," he added quickly, "that these unhappy creatures are unworthy of pity and do not deserve to have an interest taken in them. The longer I live the more clearly do I see that

the so-called criminal is in reality merely unfortunate."

He took us into his room and told a warder to bring him prisoner 503.

"I am going to show you something," he said, "which I entreat you to believe has not been arranged purposely for you; it will inspire you doubtless with some novel reflections on lawbreaking and its punishment. What you are about to see and hear I have seen and heard a hundred times in my life."

A prisoner accompanied by a wardress entered the room. She was a young peasant girl, rather pretty, sweet and simple looking.

"I have some good news for you," said the governor. "The President of the Republic, having been told of your good conduct, remits the remainder of your sentence. You will be liberated on Saturday."

She was listening with her mouth half open, her hands clasped below the waist. But she was not quick to grasp ideas.

"Next Saturday you will leave this place. You will be free."

This time she understood, her hands rose in a gesture of distress, her lips trembled.

“Is it true that I must go away? Then what will become of me? Here I was fed, clothed and everything. Could you not tell the good gentleman that it is better for me to stay where I am?”

Gently but firmly the governor showed her that she could not refuse the mercy shown her; then he informed her that on her departure she would receive a certain sum, ten or twelve francs.

She went out weeping.

I inquired what she had done.

He turned over a register.

“503. She was servant in a farmhouse. . . . She stole a petticoat from her mistress. . . . A theft committed by a servant. . . . On such offences, you must know, the law is very severe.”

EDMÉE, OR CHARITY WELL  
BESTOWED



TO H. HARDUIN

## EDMEE, OR CHARITY WELL BESTOWED



ORTEUR, the founder of *l'Etoile*, the political and literary editor of *La Revue Nationale* and of *Le Nouveau Siècle Illustré*, Horteur, having received me in his editorial room, from the depths of his editorial arm-chair addressed me thus :

“My good Marteau, write me a story for the special number of *Le Nouveau Siècle*. Three hundred lines for New Year’s Day. Something amusing with a high society atmosphere.”

I told Horteur that that was not in my line, at least not in the sense in which he understood it, but that I was prepared to write him a story.

“I should like it to be entitled,” he said, “a tale for the rich.”

“I should prefer a tale for the poor.”

“That is what I mean. A tale to inspire the rich with pity for the poor.”

“But that is precisely what I object to. I do not want the rich to have pity on the poor.”

“Curious !”

“No, it is not curious, but scientific. In my opinion the pity of the rich for the poor is an insult and a denial of human brotherhood. If you wish me to address the rich I shall say : ‘ Spare the poor your pity : they have no use for it. Wherefore pity and not justice ? You have an account with them. Settle it. This is no question of sentiment. It is a matter of economics. If that which you are pleased to give them is calculated to prolong their poverty and your wealth, the gift is iniquitous and the tears you mingle with it will not render it just. “ You must make restitution,” as the attorney said to the judge after good Brother Maillard’s sermon. You give alms in order to avoid making restitution. You give a little in order to keep much, and you gloat over it. For a like reason the tyrant of Samos threw his ring into the sea. But the Nemesis of the gods declined to receive the offering. A fisherman brought back the tyrant his ring in a fish’s belly. And Polycrates was despoiled of all his wealth’.”

“You are joking.”

“I am not joking. I want to make the rich understand that they are benevolent on the cheap,

that their generosity costs them little, that they only make the creditor curl his lip, and that such is not the way to conduct business. It is an opinion which may be of use to them."

"And these are the ideas you propose to express in *Le Nouveau Siècle* in order to increase the circulation! Not a bit of it my friend! Not a bit of it!"

"Why do you insist on the rich man assuming towards the poor an attitude different from that which he assumes towards the rich and powerful? He pays the rich what he owes them, and if he owe them nothing he pays them nothing. That is honest. If he be honest let him do the same for the poor. And do not say that the rich owe the poor nothing. I do not believe that a single rich man thinks so. It is upon the extent of the debt that opinions begin to differ. And no one is in a hurry to solve the problem. It is thought better to leave the matter vague. Every one is aware that he is in debt. But what he owes is uncertain, and so from time to time a little is paid on account. That is called philanthropy, and it is profitable."

"But, my dear fellow, there is no common sense in what you have been saying. Possibly I am more of a Socialist than you, but I am practical. To relieve suffering, to prolong a life, to redress some particle of

social injustice is to attain a result. The little good one does is at any rate done. It is not everything but it is something. If the story I ask you to write goes home to the hearts of a hundred of my rich subscribers and induces them to give it will be so much won from evil and suffering. Thus little by little the lot of the poor is rendered bearable."

"Is it good for the lot of the poor to be bearable? Poverty is indispensable to wealth and wealth to poverty. These two evils beget one another and foster one another. The condition of the poor does not need to be improved, but to be suppressed. I will not encourage the rich to give alms, because their alms are poisoned, because their alms do good to the giver and harm to the receiver, because in short, wealth being of itself hard and cruel it must not put on the deceitful appearance of kindness. Since you wish me to write a story for the rich, I will say to them: 'Your poor are your dogs whom you feed in order that they may bite. Your bedesmen become the hounds of the propertied classes who bay at the proletariat. The rich give only to those who ask. The workers ask nothing, and they receive nothing'."

"But the infirm, the aged and the orphaned? . . ."

"They have the right to live. For them I would not excite pity, I would appeal to justice."

"All this is mere theorizing! To return to reality. You will write me a New Year's Story, and you may introduce a suggestion of Socialism. Socialism is quite fashionable. It is even a distinction. Of course I am not referring to the Socialism of Guesde or of Jaurès, but to a moderate Socialism such as men of the world intelligently and rightly oppose to collectivism. Have some young faces in your story. It will be illustrated and readers like pictures to be pleasing. Bring a young girl on the scene, a charming young girl. It will not be difficult."

"No, it is not difficult."

"Could you not introduce a little chimney-sweep? I have an illustration ready, a coloured engraving, which represents a young girl giving alms to a little chimney-sweep on the steps of the Madeleine. This would be an opportunity for using it. . . . It is cold, the snow is falling: the pretty girl is dropping a coin into the chimney-sweep's hand. Can you see it?"

"I see it."

"You will develop that theme."

"I will develop it. The little sweep, in a trans-

port of gratitude throws his arms round the girl's neck. She happens to be the daughter of the Comte de Linotte. He gives her a kiss, imprinting on the charming child's cheek a little round O of soot. A perfectly enchanting little O, quite round and quite black. He loves her. Edmée (her name is Edmée) is not indifferent to so sincere and ingenuous an attachment. . . . I fancy the idea is sufficiently pathetic."

"Yes. You will be able to make something of it."

"You encourage me to continue. On her return to her sumptuous home in the Boulevard Malesherbes, for the first time in her life Edmée is reluctant to wash her face: she would like to preserve the imprint of those lips on her cheek. Meanwhile the little sweep has followed her to her door. Rapt in ecstasy he stands beneath the adorable young girl's window. . . . Will that do?"

"Why, yes!"

"I continue. The next morning, lying on her little white bed, Edmée sees the little sweep coming down the chimney. Without any ado he throws himself on the charming child and covers her with little round O's of soot. I omitted to tell you that he is extremely handsome. While thus delightfully

occupied he is surprised by the Comtesse de Linotte. She screams, she calls for help. But so absorbed is he that he neither sees nor hears."

"My dear Marteau. . . ."

"So absorbed is he that he neither sees nor hears. The Comte hastens into the room. He has the soul of a true aristocrat. He takes up the little sweep by the seat of his breeches . . . and throws him out of the window——"

"My dear Marteau. . . ."

"I hasten to conclude. . . . Nine months later the little sweep married the high-born maiden. And it was high time too. Such was the result of charity well bestowed."

"My dear Marteau, you have amused yourself long enough at my expense."

"Not a bit of it. I must finish. Having married Mademoiselle de Linotte, the little sweep became a papal count and was ruined on the Turf. To-day he is a stove dealer at Montparnasse in the Rue de la Gaîté. His wife keeps his shop and sells stoves at eighteen francs apiece payable in eight months."

"My dear Marteau it isn't the least bit funny."

"Beware, my dear Horteur. What I have just told you is really Lamartine's *Chute d'un Ange* and Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa*. And, taking it all round,



it is better than your tearful tales, which make folk believe that they are very kind when they are not kind at all, that they do good when they do nothing of the sort, that it is easy for them to be benevolent when it is the most difficult thing in the world. My story is moral. Moreover it is optimistic and ends well. For, in her shop in the Rue de la Gaîté, Edmée found the happiness which in amusements and festivities she would have sought in vain, had she been married to a diplomat or an officer. . . . My dear editor, are we agreed: Will you have *Edmée, or Charity well Bestowed* for the *Nouveau Siècle Illustré*?"

"You ask me that in all seriousness? . . ."

"In all seriousness I ask you. If you will not have my story, I will publish it elsewhere."

"Where?"

"In some high class journal."

"I dare you to do so."

"You will see."

The *Figaro*, under the editorship of Monsieur de Rodays, published *Edmée ou La Charité bien placée*. It was, so to speak, offered as a New Year's gift to the readers of that paper.

## THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS



## THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS



WE find it hard to picture to ourselves the state of mind of a man of older days who firmly believed that the Earth was the centre of the Universe, and that all the heavenly bodies revolved round it. He could feel beneath his feet the writhings of the damned amid the flames; very likely he had seen with his own eyes and smelt with his own nostrils the sulphurous fumes of Hell escaping from some fissure in the rocks. Looking upwards, he beheld the twelve spheres,—first that of the elements, comprising air and fire, then the sphere of the Moon, of Mercury, of Venus, which Dante visited on Good Friday of the year 1300, then those of the Sun, of Mars, of Jupiter, and of Saturn, then the incorruptible firmament, wherein the stars hung fixed like so many lamps. Imagination carried his gaze further still, and his mind's eye discerned in a remoter distance the Ninth Heaven, whither the Saints were translated to

glory, the *primum mobile* or crystalline, and finally the Empyrean, abode of the Blessed, to which, after death, two angels robed in white (as he steadfastly hoped) would bear his soul, as it were a little child, washed by baptism and perfumed with the oil of the last sacraments. In those times God had no other children but mankind, and all His creation was administered after a fashion at once puerile and poetical, like the routine of a vast cathedral. Thus conceived, the Universe was so simple that it was fully and adequately represented, with its true shape and proper motion, in sundry great clocks compacted and painted by the craftsmen of the Middle Ages.

We are done now with the twelve spheres and the planets under which men were born happy or unhappy, jovial or saturnine. The solid vault of the firmament is cleft asunder. Our eyes and thoughts plunge into the infinite abysses of the heavens. Beyond the planets, we discover, instead of the Empyrean of the elect and the angels, a hundred millions of suns rolling through space, escorted each by its own procession of dim satellites, invisible to us. Amidst this infinitude of systems *our* Sun is but a bubble of gas and the Earth a drop of mud. The imagination is vexed and startled when the astronomers tell us that the luminous ray which reaches us from the pole-star has been

half a century on the road ; and yet that noble star is our next neighbour, and with Sirius and Arcturus, one of the least remote of the suns that are sisters of our own. There are stars we still see in the field of our telescopes which ceased to shine, it may be, three thousand years ago.

Worlds die,—for are they not born ? Birth and death are unceasingly at work. Creation is never complete and perfect ; it goes on for ever under incessant changes and modifications. The stars go out, but we cannot say if these daughters of light, when they die down into darkness, do not enter on a new and fecund existence as planets,—if the planets themselves do not melt away and become stars again. All we know is this ; there is no more repose in the spaces of the sky than on earth, and the same law of strife and struggle governs the infinitude of the cosmic universe.

There are stars that have gone out under our eyes, while others are even now flickering like the dying flame of a taper. The heavens, which men deemed incorruptible, know of no eternity but the eternal flux of things.

That organic life is diffused through all parts of the Universe can hardly be doubted,—unless indeed organic life is a mere accident, an unhappy chance, a deplorable something that has inexplicably arisen

years to transmit its light to us as before. And the Earth, though grown smaller than an atom, would be watered with tears and blood just as copiously as it is to-day. The wonder is, not that the field of the stars is so vast, but that man has measured it.



CHRISTIANITY has done much for love by making a sin of it. The Church excludes woman from the priesthood; it fears her, and thereby shows how dangerous she is. It repeats with the Ecclesiast: "The arms of a woman are like the nets of the hunters,—*laqueus venatorum*." It warns us not to put our hope in her: "Lean not upon a reed shaken in the wind, and put not your trust therein, for all flesh is grass, and the glory thereof passeth away like the flower of the fields." It dreads the wiles of this pest of the human race: "All cunning is small beside the cunning of a woman's heart. *Brevis omnis malitia super malitiam mulieris.*" But by the very terror it betrays of her, it makes her strong and formidable.

To grasp the full significance of these maxims you must have lived with the mystics. You must have passed your childhood in a religious atmosphere. You must have gone into "retreat"; followed the observances of the Church. You must have read, at twelve years old, those little



books of edification that reveal the supernatural world to simple souls. You must have known the story of St. Francis de Borgia gazing into the open coffin of Queen Isabella, or the apparition of the Abbess of Vermont to her daughters in Christ. The Abbess had died in the odour of sanctity, and the nuns, who had shared in her works of angelic piety, believing her in Heaven, were wont to invoke her in their prayers. But one day she appeared to them, with wan face and flames licking the border of her robe. "Pray for me," she bade them; "in the days when I was alive, joining my hands in prayer, I thought what pretty hands they were. To-day I am expiating that sinful thought in the torments of Purgatory. Know, my daughters, the adorable goodness of God, and pray for me." These little books of childish theology contain a thousand tales of the kind—tales that give purity too exalted a price not to add an infinite zest to carnal pleasures.

In consideration of their beauty, the Church made Aspasia, Laïs, and Cleopatra into demons, ladies of Hell. What glory for them! Why, a Saint would have appreciated the compliment! The most modest and austere of womankind, who has no faintest wish to destroy any man's peace of mind, would fain have the power to destroy all men's. Her pride is flattered by the precautions

the Church takes against her. When poor St. Antony shouts at her : "Begone, foul beast !" his very alarm tickles her vanity deliciously. She is ravished to find herself more dangerous than she had ever suspected.

But never think too highly of yourselves, my sisters ; you were not, at your first appearance in the world, perfect and fully armed. Your grandmothers of the days of the mammoth and the giant bear did not wield the same domination over the prehistoric hunters and cavemen which you possess over us. You were useful then, and necessary, but you were not invincible. To tell the truth, in those far-off ages, and for long afterwards, you lacked charm. In those days you were like men, and men were like brutes. To make of you the fearful and wonderful thing you are to-day, to become the indifferent and sovereign cause of countless sacrifices and crimes, you still needed two things : Civilization, which gave you veils, and Religion, which gave you scruples. Since then your powers are perfected ; you are now a mystery, and you are a sin. Men dream of you and lose their souls for you. You inspire longing and alarm ; love's delirium has come into the world. Yes, it is an infallible instinct inclines you to piety. You are well advised to love Christianity. It has multiplied your puissance tenfold. Do you know St.

Jerome? At Rome and in Asia you inspired him with such panic terror that he fled to escape you into a frightful desert. There he fed on roots, and the skin clung to his fleshless bones and was burnt black by the sun, yet he found you there also. His solitude was peopled with your phantoms, yet more alluring even than yourselves.

For it is a truth, only too well proven by the ascetics, that the dreams you excite are more seductive, if that is possible, than the realities you have in your power to offer. Jerome rejected with equal horror your presence and the remembrance of your presence. But in vain he gave himself up to fasts and prayers; you filled his life, from which he had expelled you, with hallucinations. Such was the power of woman over a Saint. I doubt if it is as great over an habitué of the Moulin-Rouge. Take heed your empire be not diminished along with men's belief in God; beware you do not lose a portion of your influence through ceasing to be a sin.

Candidly I do not think rationalism is good for you. In your place, I should not be overfond of the physiologists who are so indiscreet, who are so over ready to explain things to you, who say you are sick when we think you are inspired, and who attribute to the predominance of reflex actions your sublime potentialities for love and suffering.

That is not the way they speak of you in the *Golden Legend*; 'white dove,' 'lily of purity,' 'rose of love,' are the names they give you there. Surely this is more agreeable than to be dubbed hysterical, cataleptic, subject to hallucinations,—as you are every day since science has ruled the roast.

Moreover, if I were one of you, I should cordially detest all those emancipators of the sex who are for making you into men's equals. They are urging you to take a false step. Fine promotion, to be sure, for you, to be as good as an attorney or a druggist! Take care, I say; already you have stripped off some particles of your mystery and fascination. All is not lost. Men still fight, and ruin and kill themselves for you; but the young fellows in tramcars leave you to stand on the platform while they sit snug inside. Your cult is declining along with other things once held sacrosanct.



AMBLERS play just as lovers make love and drunkards drink,—blindly and of necessity, under domination of an irresistible force. There are beings vowed to play, as there are others vowed to love. I wonder who invented the story of the two sailors who were so possessed by the lust of gambling? They were shipwrecked, and only escaped a watery grave, after experiencing the most appalling vicissitudes, by climbing on the back of a whale. The instant they were installed there, they lugged out of their pockets dice and dice-boxes and settled themselves down to play. The story is truer than truth. Every gambler is like those sailors. And in very deed there is something in play that does terribly stir the fibres of daring hearts. Is it an insignificant delight to tempt fortune? Is it a pleasure devoid of intoxication to taste in one second months, years, a whole life-time of fears and hopes? I was not ten years old when M. Grépinet, my master in the junior class,

read us out the fable of the *Man and the Genie*. Yet I remember the tale better than if I had read it yesterday. A genie gives a boy a ball of thread, and tells him : "This is the thread of your life. Take it. When you find time heavy on your hands, pull it out ; your days will pass quick or slow according as you unwind the ball rapidly or little by little. So long as you leave the thread alone, you will remain stationary at the same hour of your existence." The boy took the thread ; first he pulled at it to become a man, then to marry the girl he loved, then to see his children grow up, to win offices and profit and honour, to abridge anxieties, to escape griefs and the infirmities that came with the years, and finally, alas ! to cut short a peevish old age. He had lived just four months and six days since the date of the genie's visit.

Well, what is play, I should like to know, but the art of producing in a second the changes that Destiny ordinarily effects only in the course of many hours or even many years, the art of collecting into a single instant the emotions dispersed throughout the slow-moving existence of ordinary men, the secret of living a whole lifetime in a few minutes, in a word the genie's ball of thread ? Play is a hand-to-hand encounter with Fate. It is the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel, the pact of

Doctor Faustus with the Devil. The stake is money,—in other words immediate, infinite possibilities of pleasure. Perhaps the next card turned, the ball now rolling, will give the player parks and gardens, fields and forests, castles and manors lifting heavenward their pointed turrets and fretted roofs. Yes, that little dancing ball holds within it acres of good land and roofs of slate with sculptured chimneys reflected in the broad bosom of the Loire ; it contains treasures of art, marvels of taste, jewels of price, the most exquisite bodies in all the world, nay ! even souls,—souls none ever dreamt were venal, all the decorations, all the distinctions, all the elegance, and all the puissance of the world. What do I say ? It contains better than that ; it embraces the dream and vision of it all. And you would have me give up play ? Nay ; if play only availed to give endless hopes, if our only vision of it were the smile of its green eyes, it would be loved less fanatically. But it has nails of adamant, it is cruel and terrible, at its caprice it gives poverty and wretchedness and shame ; that is why its votaries adore it.

The fascination of danger is at the bottom of all great passions. There is no fullness of pleasure unless the precipice is near. It is the mingling of terror with delight that intoxicates. And what more terrifying than play ? It gives and takes away ;

its logic is not our logic. It is dumb and blind and deaf. It is almighty. It is a God.

Yes, a God ; it has its votaries and its saints, who love it for itself, not for what it promises, and who fall down in adoration when its blow strikes them. It strips them ruthlessly, and they lay the blame on themselves, not on their deity.

“I played a bad game,” they say.

They find fault with themselves ; they do not blaspheme their God.





THE human race is not susceptible of an indeterminate progress. To allow of its development, the Earth had to conform to certain conditions, physical and chemical, which are not stable. There was a time when our planet was not suitable for mankind ; it was too hot and moist. A time will come when it will cease to be suitable ; it will be too cold and dry. When the sun goes out,—a catastrophe that is bound to be,—mankind will have long ago disappeared. The last inhabitants of earth will be as destitute and ignorant, as feeble and dull-witted, as the first. They will have forgotten all the arts and all the sciences. They will huddle wretchedly in caves alongside the glaciers that will then roll their transparent masses over the half-obliterated ruins of the cities where now men think and love, suffer and hope. All the elms and lindens will have been killed by the cold ; and the firs will be left sole masters of the frozen earth. The last desperate survivors of human-

kind,—desperate without so much as realizing why or wherefore,—will know nothing of us, nothing of our genius, nothing of our love; yet will they be our latest-born children and blood of our blood. A feeble flicker of the regal intelligence of nobler days, still lingering in their dulled brains, will for a while yet enable them to hold their empire over the bears that have multiplied about their subterranean lurking-places. Peoples and races will have disappeared beneath the snow and ice, with the towns, the highways, the gardens of the old world. With pain and difficulty a few isolated families will keep alive. Women, children, old men, crowded pell-mell in their noisome caves, will peep through fissures in the rock and watch a sombre sun mount the sky above their heads; dull yellow gleams will flit across his disk, like flames playing about a dying brand, while a dazzling snow of stars will shine on all the day long in the black heavens, through the icy air. This is what they will see; but in their heavy witlessness they will not so much as know that they see anything. One day the last survivor, callous alike to hate and love, will exhale to the unfriendly sky the last human breath. And the globe will go rolling on, bearing with it through the silent fields of space the ashes of humanity, the poems of Homer and the august remnants of the Greek marbles, frozen to its icy

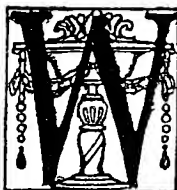
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surfaces. No thought will ever again rise towards the infinite from the bosom of this dead world, where the soul has dared so much,—at least no thought of man's. For who can tell if another thought will not grow into consciousness of itself, and this tomb where we all shall sleep become the cradle of a new soul? What soul, I cannot tell. The insect's, perhaps.

Side by side with mankind, and in spite of him, the insects, bees for instance, and ants, have already wrought marvels. True, the ants and bees are like us in needing light and heat. But there are invertebrates less sensitive to cold. Who can foretell the future reserved for their activity and patience?

Who knows if the earth may not become good for them, when it has ceased to be habitable by us? Who knows if they may not one day develop consciousness of themselves and the world they live in? Who knows if in their time and season they too may not praise God?

## TO LUCIEN MUHLFELD



WE cannot represent to ourselves with precision what exists no longer. What we call local colour is a dream. When we see how a painter has all the trouble in the world to reproduce anything like a true likeness of a scene, say, of the time of Louis Philippe, we may well despair of his ever giving us the faintest notion of an event that befell under St. Louis or Augustus. We waste endless pains in copying old armour and old oak chests. The artists of olden days never troubled their heads with such-like pedantry. They gave the heroes of legend or history the costume and appearance of their own contemporaries. Thus they depicted for us in natural colours their soul and their century. Can an artist do better? Each of their personages was someone of their own circle, and these figures, living pictures of their life and thought, remain for ever touching. They bear witness to future times of sentiments and emotions actually experienced. Paintings of archæological correctness testify only to the wealth of our museums.

If you would taste true art and see a picture that gives a broad and deep impression, examine the frescoes of Ghirlandajo in Santa-Maria-Novella at Florence, representing the *Birth of the Virgin*. The old painter shows us the room where the mother has been delivered. Anne, raised on the bed, is neither young nor beautiful ; but we see at once she is a good housewife. She has ranged at the head of the bed a jar of sweetmeats and two pomegranates. A serving-maid, standing between the bed and the wall, offers her a ewer on a platter. The child has just been washed, and the copper basin still stands in the middle of the floor. The babe Mary is taking the breast ; her wet-nurse for the nonce is a young and beautiful woman, a lady of the city, a mother herself, who has graciously offered to lend her bosom, to the end the child and her own, having imbibed life at the same fount, may keep the savour of it in common, and by force of their blood love each other like brother and sister. Near her stands another young woman, or we should rather say a young girl, like her in feature, perhaps her sister, richly dressed, wearing the hair drawn away from her brow and plaited at the temples like Æmilia Pia ; she stretches out her two arms towards the infant with a charming gesture that betrays the awakening of the maternal instinct. Two noble

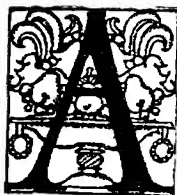
ladies, clad in the fashion of Florence, are coming in to offer their felicitations. They are attended by a serving-maid, carrying on her head a basket of water-melons and grapes. The figure is of a large, simple beauty ; draped in flowing garments confined by a girdle the ends of which float in the wind, she seems to intervene in this pious, domestic scene like a dream of pagan antiquity. Well, in this warm room, in these gentle womanly faces, I see expressed all the life of Florence and the fine flower of the early Renaissance. This goldsmith's son, this master of the Primitives, has revealed in his painting, which has the clearness and brilliancy of a summer dawn, all the secret of that courteous epoch in which he had the good fortune to live, and which possessed so great a charm of its own that his contemporaries themselves were wont to cry : "The Gods are good indeed ! Oh, thrice-blessed age ! "

It is the artist's part to love life and show us it is beautiful. Without him, we might well doubt the fact !



IGNORANCE is the necessary condition, I do not say of happiness, but of life itself. If we knew everything, we could not endure existence a single hour. The sentiments that make it sweet to us, or at any rate tolerable, spring from a falsehood, and are fed on illusions.

If, like God, a man possessed the truth, the sole and perfect truth, and once let it escape out of his hands, the world would be annihilated there and then, and the universe melt away instantly like a shadow. Divine truth, like a last judgment, would reduce it to powder.



JEALOUS man is jealous indeed ; there is nothing he does not find food for umbrage in, nothing that is not a subject for self-torment. He knows a woman false from the first, from the mere fact that she lives and breathes. He fears those workings of the inward life, those varied impulses of the flesh and spirit which make the woman a creature apart and distinct from himself, a creature independent, instinctive, ambiguous, and at times inconceivable. He suffers because she blossoms forth, of her own sweet nature, like a beautiful flower, without the possibility of any love, no matter how masterful, capturing and holding all the perfume she sheds in that stirring moment that is youth and life. At heart, the one reproach he has against her is that,—*she is*. She is, she is alive, she is beautiful, she dreams dreams. What mortal disquietude in the thought ! He wants her, wants her whole body, wants it in more consummate fullness and perfection than Nature has permitted ; he wants her, body and soul !



Woman has none of these wild fancies. More often than not, what we take for jealousy in her is only rivalry. But as for this torment of the senses, this demoniacal possession by odious imaginings, this insane and piteous frenzy, this physical rage, she knows nothing of all this, or next to nothing. Her feelings, in such a case, are less definite and downright than our own. One kind of imagination is not highly developed in her, even in matters of love and the senses,—viz. the plastic imagination, the precise appreciation of definite outlines. A large vagueness clings about her impressions, and all her energies are equally agog for the struggle. Once her jealousy is roused, she fights with a fell obstinacy, at once violent and artful, of which a man is incapable. The same spur that tears our very vitals pricks her on to the contest. Her dethronement only makes her strive the more resolutely to win empire and domination. Her chagrin is more than counterbalanced by the access of insolent self-confidence she draws from her disappointment.

Look at Racine's Hermione. Her jealousy does not exhaust itself in black fumes of impotent passion; she displays little imagination; she does not weave her torments into a lurid epic of heart-breaking imaginings. She does not brood over her wrongs,—and what is jealousy without brooding?

What is jealousy without the demoniacal possession, the mad, monomaniacal obsession? Hermione is not jealous. Her mind is set on hindering a marriage. She is resolved to prevent it at any cost and win back a lover,—that is all.

And when Neoptolemus is killed for her sake, by her instrumentality, she is startled certainly; but her predominant feeling is chagrin, disappointment. Her marriage project has miscarried. A *man* in her place would have exclaimed: "So much the better; this woman I loved will never wed another now!"



**SOCIETY** is vain and frivolous. Granted. Nevertheless, it is no bad school for politicians. Indeed we may well regret it is so little frequented by our present-day statesmen. What constitutes society? Woman; she is its sovereign arbitress; it exists by her and for her exclusively. But Woman forms the great educating influence for men; she it is trains him in the gifts that charm,—courtesy, discretion, and the pride that shudders to be self-assertive. She it is teaches a few the art of pleasing, and all the useful art of not displeasing. From her we learn the lesson that human society is more complex and more delicately adjusted than is generally suspected by the politicians of the cafés. Last but not least, it is she brings home to us the great truth that the ideals of sentiment and the visions of faith are invincible forces, and that it is by no means reason that governs humankind.



THE comic soon becomes painful when it contains a human element. Does not *Don Quixote* sometimes make you weep? For my part, I greatly enjoy certain books that breathe a calm and contented disconsolateness, such as Cervantes' incomparable romance, or *Candide*,—works which are, if rightly regarded, manuals of toierance and indulgent pity, holy bibles of benignity.



RUTH is not the objective of Art. It is the Sciences we must appeal to for that, as it is what *they* aim at; not to Literature, which has, and can have, no objective but beauty.

The Chloe of Greek romance was never a real shepherdess, nor Daphnis a real goat-herd; yet they please us still. The subtle-minded Greek who narrated their story cared not a fig for sheepfolds or goats. All he thought of was poetry and love. So, being fain to unfold, for the gratification of his fellow cits, a tale of sensuous and graceful love, he took for setting the rustic country, where his readers never went. For who were they? Old Byzantine fellows, grown white in their palace chambers, amidst strange, barbarous mosaics, or behind the receipt of custom, whereat they had amassed endless wealth. To enliven these peevish greybeards the writer showed them a pair of beautiful children. Then, for fear they might confound his Daphnis and Chloe with the vicious little brats of boys and girls that swarm in the

streets of great cities, he took care to add : "The two I am telling you about lived once upon a time in Lesbos, and their history was depicted in a wood sacred to the Nymphs." In fact, he took the same excellent precaution which goodwives never fail to adopt before beginning a fairy-tale, when they say : "In the days when Berthe span," or "When the animals used to talk."

If we are to have a really pretty story, the bounds of everyday experience and usage must needs be a little overstepped.



WE count love among things infinite.  
It is not the women's fault.



CANNOT think that twelve hundred individuals met together to hear a play constitute an assembly necessarily inspired with infallible wisdom ; still the public, it seems to me, does bring with it to the theatre a simpleness of heart and sincerity of mind that give a certain value to the feelings it experiences. Many people who find it impossible to frame an idea of anything they have read are capable of giving a very fairly exact account of what they have seen represented on the stage. When you read a book you read it how you please, you read in it, or rather into it, what you choose. A book leaves everything to the imagination. This is why uncultivated, common minds as a rule take only a feeble, ineffectual pleasure in reading. The stage is different ; it puts everything before the eyes and dispenses with any help from the imagination. This is why it satisfies the great majority, and likewise why it does not appeal very strongly to pensive, meditative minds. Such persons appre-



ciate a situation, a thought, only for the sake of the amplifications it suggests to them, the melodious echo it wakes in their own minds. Their fancies are unexercised in a theatre ; the play gives them only a passive pleasure, to which they prefer the active one of reading.

What is a book ? A series of little printed signs,—essentially only that. It is for the reader to supply himself the forms and colours and sentiments to which these signs correspond. It will depend on him whether the book be dull or brilliant, hot with passion or cold as ice. Or, if you prefer it put otherwise, each word in a book is a magic finger that sets a fibre of our brain vibrating like a harp-string, and so evokes a note from the sounding-board of our soul. No matter how skilful, how inspired, the artist's hand ; the sound it awakes depends on the quality of the strings within ourselves. It is not quite the same with the stage. The little black marks are there replaced by living images. For the tiny printed characters, which leave so much to be guessed, are substituted men and women, who have nothing vague or mysterious about them. Everything is precisely fixed and determined. Hence the several impressions received by different spectators vary within the narrowest possible limits compatible with the fatal diversity of human points of view.

So too we see in all theatrical representations (when literary or political quarrels do not complicate matters) how true and genuine a sympathy is established among all present in the house. If, further, we remember that of all arts, the dramatic is the closest to life, we must see that it is the easiest to understand and appreciate, and conclude it to be the one of all others as to which the public is most in accord and most sure of its opinion.



DOES death put an end to us utterly and entirely? I am not prepared to deny it. It is highly possible. In that case there is no need to fear death :—

*Je suis, elle n'est pas ; elle est, je ne suis plus.*<sup>1</sup>

But supposing that, while striking us down, it leaves us still in existence, be sure we shall find ourselves beyond the grave exactly the same as we were on earth. Doubtless we shall feel not a little abashed ; the thought is of a sort to spoil heaven and hell for us beforehand. It robs us of all hope, for the thing of all others we most earnestly desire is to become something quite different from what we are. But this is plainly forbidden us.

<sup>1</sup> I am, it is not ; it is, I cease to be.



HERE is a little German book entitled, *Notes to Illustrate the Book of Life*, the author's name Gerhard d'Amyntor,—containing much that is true, and consequently much that is sad. In it we see depicted the ordinary conditions of women's life. "It is in these daily cares that the mother of a family loses her buoyancy and strength, and is worn to the very marrow of her bones. The everlasting question, 'What must we have for dinner to-day?' the constantly recurring necessity of sweeping floors, beating and brushing clothes, dusting furniture, all this is the never-ceasing drip-drip of the water-drop that slowly but surely breaks down mind as well as body in the long run. It is in front of the kitchen range that, by a cruel, commonplace magic, the pretty pink-and-white fairy, with her crystal laugh, is transformed into a smoke-dried and dismal-looking black mummy. On the sooty altar where the *pot-au-feu* simmers are sacrificed youth, freedom, beauty, joy!" Such, as near as may be, are Gerhard d'Amyntor's words.

This is indeed the lot of the vast majority of women. Life is hard for them, as it is for men. If we ask why existence in these days is so painful and laborious, the answer is,—it cannot well be otherwise on a planet where the indispensable necessities of living are so scarce, and involve such toils and difficulties to produce and procure. Causes so deep-seated, and which depend on the very configuration of the earth, on its constitution, its flora and fauna, are, alas! permanent and necessary. Work, with whatever fairness it may be repartitioned, will always weigh heavy on the major part of men and women; few of either sex can have leisure to develop their beauty and intellect under æsthetic conditions. Only Nature is to blame.

Meantime, what becomes of love? It fares as it may. Hunger is its great enemy. And it is an incontrovertible fact that women are hungry. It seems likely that in the Twentieth, as in the Nineteenth Century, they will do the cooking,—unless, indeed, Socialism brings back the period when the hunters devoured their quarry while the flesh was still warm, and Venus coupled forest lovers in the wilds. Then woman was free. I am going to make a confession: If I had created man and woman, I should have framed them on a type widely different from that which has actually

prevailed,—that of the higher mammals. I should have made men and women, not to resemble the great apes as they do, but on the model of the insects which, after a lifetime as caterpillars, change into butterflies and for the brief final term of their existence have no other thought but to love and be lovely. I should have set youth at the end of the human span. Some insects, in their last metamorphosis, have wings and no stomach. They are reborn in this purified form only to love an hour and die.

If I were a god, or rather a *demiurge*,—for the Alexandrine philosophers teach that these minor works of creation are rather the business of the *demiurge*, or simply of some journeyman demon,—well, if I were *demiurge* or demon, it is these insects I should have chosen as models whereon to fashion mankind. I should have preferred man to accomplish, like them, in the preliminary *larva* stage the disgusting functions necessary to nutrition. In this phase, the sexes would not have been distinguished, and hunger would not have degraded love. Then I should have so arranged that, in a final metamorphosis, man and woman, unfurling glittering wings, lived awhile on dew and desire and died in a rapturous kiss. Thus I should have added love as crown and recompense of their mortal existence. Yes, it would have been better

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so. However, I did not make the world, and the *demiurge* who undertook the task did not take advice from me. I have my doubts, between you and me, if he ever consulted the philosophers and men of parts at all.



It is a great mistake to suppose that scientific truths differ essentially from those of every day. The only distinction is their superior degree of extension and precision. From the point of view of practice, the difference is highly important. At the same time we must not forget that the savant's powers of observation are limited to appearances and phenomena, and can never penetrate the substance or know anything of the true nature of things. An eye armed with a microscope is only a human eye after all. It sees more than the naked eye does, but not in any different way. The man of science multiplies the points of contact between man and nature, but it is impossible for him to modify in any particular the essential character of the mutual relations between the two. He sees the manner of production of certain phenomena which escape us, but he is prohibited, just as much as we are, from inquiring why they are so produced.

To demand a system of morals from Science is to

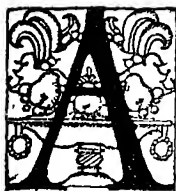


invite cruel disappointments. Men believed, three hundred years ago, that the earth was the centre of creation. Nowadays we know it is only a coagulated drop of the sun. We know what gases burn at the surface of the most distant stars. We know that the universe, in which we are a wandering speck of dust, is for ever in labour, bringing to birth and devouring its offspring; we know that heavenly bodies are ceaselessly dying and being born. But wherein has our moral nature been altered by these prodigious discoveries? Have mothers come to love their little ones better or less ardently? Do we appreciate the beauty of women any more or any less in consequence? Does a hero's heart beat any differently within his bosom? No, no! Be the earth great or small, what matter is that to mankind? It is always great enough, provided it gives us a stage for suffering and for love. To suffer and to love, these are the twin sources of its inexhaustible beauty. Suffering, pain,—how divine it is, how misunderstood! To it we owe all that is good in us, all that makes life worth living; to it we owe pity, and courage, and all the virtues. The earth is but a grain of sand in the barren infinity of worlds. Yet, if it is only on the earth creatures suffer, it is greater than all the rest of the universe put together. Nay! it is everything, and the rest is nothing. For otherwise, without it, there is neither virtue

nor genius. What is genius, if not the art of charming away pain? Very great minds have, I know, cherished other hopes. Renan surrendered himself with smiling alacrity to the dream of a scientific morality. He reposed an almost unlimited confidence in Science. He believed it would change the world, because it can tunnel mountains. I do not think with him that it can make us gods. To say the truth, I do not very much want it to. I do not feel I have within me the stuff of a divinity, no matter how petty a one. My feebleness is dear to me. I cling to my imperfection, as the very essence of my being.



HERE is a small canvas of Jean Béraud's that possesses a strange interest for me. It is called the *Salle Graffard*, — representing a public meeting where we seem to see the superheated brains fuming alongside the smoking pipes and lamps. No doubt the scene has its comic side; but how deep and true is the comedy! And how sad! This amazing picture contains one figure that goes farther to make me understand the socialist workman than twenty books of history and economics. It is a little bald man, all head, no shoulders to speak of, who is seated at the committee-table in his woollen comforter,—an art workman, no doubt, and a man of ideas, sickly and physically impotent, an ascetic of the proletariat, a Sir Galahad of the workshop, as chaste, and as fanatical, as the Saints of the Church in the Ages of Faith. Verily the man is an Apostle, and as we look at him we feel a new Religion is come to birth among the masses.



AN English Geologist, a man of the finest and most unprejudiced intellect, Sir Charles Lyell, established, forty years or so ago, what is known as the theory of subsisting causes, or "causes now in operation."<sup>1</sup> He proved that the changes which have occurred in the course of ages on the earth's surface were not due, as was supposed, to sudden cataclysms, but were the result of slow, almost imperceptible causes that are equally in action at the present time. According to his argument, we see that these mighty changes, the traces of which surround us, appear so tremendous only because of the foreshortening effect of vast periods of time, whereas in reality they came about very gently and gradually. By slow degrees and without any violent disturbance the ocean changed its bed, and the glaciers crept

<sup>1</sup> The first volume of the "Principles" was published in 1830; its title is a summary of Lyell's work: "Principles of Geology: being an Attempt to explain the former changes of the Earth's surface, by reference to *Causes now in Operation*."—A. A.

down over the plains, hitherto covered with forests of tree-fern. Similar transformations are being wrought under our eyes, without our so much as being able to observe them. In a word, where Cuvier beheld a series of sudden and appalling catastrophes, Charles Lyell makes us see only the slow, beneficent action of natural forces. It strikes one what benefits this theory of subsisting causes would bring in its train, if it could be transferred from the physical to the moral sphere, and made the basis of a system of conduct. The spirit of conservatism and the spirit of revolution would there find a common ground of reconciliation.

Convinced that alterations are not felt or noticed when they operate continuously, the opponent of change would cease to block necessary reforms, for fear of accumulating a reserve of destructive forces at the very spot where he had set up an obstacle. The revolutionary, on the other hand, would refrain from an imprudent and inopportune appeal to energies he knew to be always in operation. The more I think of it, the more I am persuaded, if only the moral theory of subsisting causes won a lodgment in the conscience of humanity, it would metamorphose all the peoples of the earth into a commonwealth of sages. The only difficulty is to effect that lodgment, and it must be allowed it is a formidable one.



HAVE been reading a book lately, in which a poet and philosopher shows us a race of men exempt from joy, grief, and curiosity. On quitting this new Utopia and coming back to earth, when we look round and see our fellows striving, loving, suffering, how one's heart goes out to them, and how content one is to suffer in sympathy! How surely we realize that here, and here only, is true joy to be found. It springs from suffering, as the healing balm flows from the wounded bark of the kindly tree. They have killed passion, and at one and the same blow slain joy and grief, suffering and pleasure, good, evil, beauty, everything in short, and virtue first and foremost. They are wise, yet they are worthless. For what of worth is attained without effort? What use that their life is long if they leave it empty, if they do not live?

The book goes far to make me, on reflection, well content with man's lot, hard as it is, to reconcile me with his painful existence, in a word to renew

my esteem for my fellow-creatures and my wide human sympathies. It has another excellence : it fosters our love of reality and enters a caveat against the spirit of vain imaginings and self-deception. By showing us a set of beings exempt from the ills of life, it lets us see for ourselves that these unfortunate favourites of fortune are actually our inferiors, and that it would be the height of folly to exchange (granting such a thing were possible) our own condition for theirs.

Truly a pitiful sort of happiness ! Having no passions, they have no art, no poetry. How should they breed poets ? They can savour—how should they ?—neither the Epic muse, that is inspired by the wild frenzies of love and hate, nor yet the Comic, that laughs in merry concert with the vices and foibles of mankind. They have lost the power of imagining a Dido or a Phædra, poor emasculated minds ! They cannot glimpse the divine shades, the immortal spectres, that wander by, shuddering, under the undying myrtles.

They are blind and deaf to the miracles of that art of poetry which makes the common earth divine. They have not Virgil ; and we call them happy, because they have lifts and electric light. Yet, be sure, a single beautiful line has wrought the world more good than all the masterpieces of mechanism !

Inexorable progress ! it has given us a people of engineers that has neither passions, nor poetry, nor love ! Alas ! how should they know love, seeing they are happy ? Love blossoms only in pain. What are lovers' complaints if not cries of suffering ? "A god would be unhappy, how unhappy, in my place !" exclaims an English poet, with intense feeling ; "a god, my beloved, could not suffer, could not die, for you !"

We had best forgive pain, and frankly admit it is impossible to imagine a happiness greater than what we enjoy in this human life of ours, so sweet and so bitter, so bad and so good, at once ideal and real, a life that embraces all things and reconciles all opposites. Yes, that is our garden-plot, which we must dig zealously.





RELIGIONS are strong and beneficent because they teach man his *raison d'être*, the final causes of his existence. Those who have rejected the dogmas of theological morality, as almost all of us have done in this age of science and intellectual freedom, have no means left of knowing why they are in the world and what they are come there to do.

Fate envelops us entirely in the mysterious processes of her mighty alchemy, and really our one and only resource is to give up thinking altogether, if we are not to feel too cruelly the tragic absurdity of living. It is here, in our absolute ignorance of the why and wherefore of our existence, lies the root of our melancholy and sick disgust of life. Physical evil, moral evil, the miseries of the soul and the senses, the prosperity of the wicked, the humiliation of the just man, all this would still be endurable, if we could grasp the system and economy of it all, if we could divine a providence directing the chaos. The believer finds a perverse pleasure

in his sores ; his enemies supply him with the agreeable spectacle of their acts of violence and injustice ; even his misdeeds and crimes do not rob him of hope. But in a society where all faith is blotted out in darkness, sin and sorrow lose all their meaning, and only strike us as odious jests, ill-omened farcical impertinences.



HERE is always a moment when curiosity becomes a sin ; the Devil has always ranged himself on the side of the savants.



WHEN staying at Saint-Lô, ten or a dozen years ago, I met at the house of a friend, who resides in that hilly little town, a priest, a cultivated and eloquent man, in whose conversation I found no little pleasure.

Little by little, I won his confidence, and we enjoyed many talks on serious subjects, in which he revealed the acuteness and subtlety of his mind no less than the fine spiritual candour of his soul. He was a wise man and a saint. A finished casuist and a great theologian, he expressed himself with so much force and fascination that I found no pleasure so enthralling in the little place as listening to him.

Yet it was several days before I dared look at him. In stature, shape, and features he was a monster. Picture a dwarf, bandy-legged and deformed, the whole man twitching and jumping with a sort of St. Vitus's dance inside his *soutane*, as in a bag. Close curls of fair hair surmounted the brow, and by their revelation of youthfulness

made the general aspect of the man more horrifying still. At last, however, having plucked up courage to look him in the face, I found a sort of overmastering interest in contemplating his hideousness. I looked and pondered. While the lips, opening in a seraphic smile, displayed the blackened remains of three teeth, and the eyes, lifted to heaven, rolled horribly between blood-red lids, I looked at him in admiring wonder. Far from compassionating him, I envied a being so miraculously preserved, by the utter deformity of his person, from the trials of the flesh, the lapses of the senses, and the temptations night brings on its dusky wings. I deemed him happy among men.

Well, one day as we were walking together in the sun down the slope of the hills on which the town is built, discussing heavenly grace, suddenly the priest stopped dead, and laying a heavy hand on my arm, said in a ringing voice I can hear at this moment—

“I tell you this, I know it : chastity is a virtue that cannot be preserved without a special intervention of God’s good help.”

The speech showed me in a flash the unfathomable abyss of the sins of the flesh. What righteous soul is not sore tempted, if this man, who had no body, one would think, save as the vehicle of pain and nausea, if he too felt the pricks of desire ?



PERSONS of great piety or high artistic sensibility infuse into Religion or Art a refined sensuality. But then sensuality always implies some degree of fetish-worship. The poet makes fetishes of words and tones. He lends miraculous virtues to certain combinations of syllables and, like the devotee, is fain to believe in the potency of consecrated formulas.

There is more of ritual in verse-making than most people think. Indeed, to a poet grown grey in his art, writing verses is the fulfilment of a sacrosanct ceremony. Such a mind is instinctively opposed to novelty, and we need not wonder at the intolerance that is its natural outcome.

We are hardly entitled even to smile when we see the very men who, rightly or wrongly, lay claim to have been the boldest innovators the first to repudiate new ideas with the utmost indignation and disgust. This is one of the commonest inconsistencies of the human mind, and the history of religious reformation has some tragic instances to

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show. We have seen a Henry Estienne forced to fly his country to escape the flames, and from the land of exile denouncing to the stake his own friends who did not see eye to eye with him ; we have seen Calvin hounding Servetus to death ; and all the world knows the extremity of intolerance displayed by Revolutionaries.

At one time I knew personally an old Senator or the Republic, who as a young man had been a member of all the Secret Societies that conspired against Charles X, had fomented fifty risings under the Government of July, then in later life had concocted plots to overturn the Empire and taken a hand in three successive Revolutions. He was a quiet, peaceable old man, whose face never lost its look of smiling geniality in the debates in the house. It seemed as though nothing could ever again disturb the equanimity he had purchased with so many years of weary turmoil. His whole personality breathed only complacency and contented acquiescence. Yet one day I saw him roused to furious indignation. A fire that seemed quenched long ago flamed up in his eyes. He was looking out of a window in the Luxembourg and saw a caucus of students filing in disorderly procession through the Gardens. The sight of this innocent revolt against authority stirred him to a veritable frenzy.

“Shameful, shameful, such a breach of order in a public place!” he cried out, his voice choking with anger and alarm,—and he sent for the police. He was a fine old fellow. But after being a leader of *émeutes* himself, he dreaded the merest shadow of rebellion. Men who have engineered revolutions cannot endure that others should take upon them to rise in revolt.

In the same way old poets, who have made their mark by some poetical innovation, are bitterly opposed to any further changes whatever. They are only human after all. It is a painful thing, to any but a great and wise philosopher, to see life going on the same after one has ceased to influence it, to feel oneself drowned in the flowing tide of events. Poet, Senator, or Cobbler, a man finds it hard to resign his claim to be the final cause of things, the supreme motive of the created universe.





SAID PEAKING generally, we may say poets are not aware of the scientific laws which they obey when they make good verses. In matters of prosody they cling, very rightly, to the most artless "rule of thumb," and it would be far from wise to blame them for it. In art as in love, instinct is an adequate guide, and any light science may throw on the subject only baffles the eyes. Beauty is based ultimately on geometry, but yet it is only by the æsthetic sense we can grasp its delicate shades and shapes.

Yes, poets are lucky men; a part of their strength resides in the very fact of their ignorance. Only they must not be too keen to argue about the laws of their art; when they lose their innocence their charm goes with it, and like fish out of water they flounder helplessly in the arid regions of theory.



WHAT a foolish phrase, the "know thyself" of the Greek philosopher! Why, we can never know either ourselves or others. A fine task, indeed! To create a new world would be less impossible than to comprehend the old. Hegel had an inkling of this. Perhaps the human intellect may one day avail to frame a universe; it is for ever incompetent to conceive things as they are. So it is an iniquitous abuse of intelligence, nothing less, to employ it in searching after truth. Still less can it help us to set up a standard of justice, and weigh men and their works thereby. It is properly enough employed over those games, more complicated than shovel-board or chess, which we call Metaphysics, Ethics, Æsthetics. But the way it serves us best and gives most gratification is by seizing here and there some salient angle, some bright spot of things existent, and making play with it, yet never spoiling the innocent frolic by a spirit of system and moral sententiousness.



YOU say that our habit of philosophizing is at the root of all our ills. But to hold it so disastrous as all this is surely a monstrous exaggeration of its importance and power.

As a matter of fact, the reason trespasses far less than people think on the domains of the instincts and natural feelings, even in persons whose reasoning faculties are most highly developed, but who are every whit as selfish and greedy and sensual as the generality of mankind. We shall never find a Physiologist submitting his heart-beats and the rhythm of his respiration to the dictates of pure reason. No matter how advanced, how scientific the civilization, the operations that men undertake according to reasoned method are few in number and unimportant compared with such as instinct and common impulse perform of themselves. So little does our conscious will react against our reflex activities that I am afraid to say that human societies exhibit anything approaching an intellectual constitution as distinguished from a natural.

After all is said and done, a metaphysician is not so widely different from the rest of mankind as people think and as he wishes them to think.

And, then, what is thinking? and how do we think? We think with words; that by itself constitutes a sensible basis and brings us back to natural preconditions. Reflect a little; a Metaphysician possesses, to build up his system of the Universe with, only the perfected cries of apes and dogs. What he styles profound speculation and transcendental method is only setting in a row, arbitrarily arranged, the onomatopoetic noises where-with the brutes expressed hunger and fear and desire in the primeval forests, and to which have gradually become attached meanings that are assumed to be abstract only because they are less definite.

Never fear; this series of petty noises, deadened and enfeebled in the course of ages, that goes to make up a book of philosophy will never teach us too much of the Universe to permit us to inhabit it any longer. We are all in the dark together; the only difference is, the savant keeps knocking at the wall, while the ignoramus stays quietly in the middle of the room.

## TO GABRIEL SÉAILLES



I CANNOT say whether this world of ours is the worst of all possible worlds. I hold it is gross flattery to grant it any pre-eminence, were it only the pre-eminence of evil. What we can imagine of other worlds is very little, and physical astronomy affords us no very precise information as to the conditions of life on the surface even of those planets which are nearest to our own. All we know is that Venus and Mars bear a considerable resemblance to the Earth. This resemblance is enough warrant by itself for our believing that evil is in the ascendant there as it is here, and that our world is only one of the provinces of its vast empire. We have no reason to suppose that life is any better on the surface of those giant globes, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune, which glide silently through the infinite spaces of the sky where the sun is already beginning to lose some portion of his heat and light. Who can tell what kind of beings inhabit these worlds shrouded in dense, swiftly

shifting vapours? Judging by analogy, we cannot help thinking that our whole solar system is one vast gehenna, where animal life is born only to suffer and to die. Nor can we comfort ourselves with the fancy that perhaps the fixed stars give light to planets of happier conditions. No, the stars are too much like our own sun for that. Science has decomposed the feeble ray they take years, centuries, to transmit to us ; and the analysis of their light proves that the substances which burn on their surface are the very same that surge and eddy round the orb which, ever since men have been in existence, has lighted and warmed their life of misery and folly and pain. This analogy alone is enough to fill me with a sick disgust of the Universe.

The homogeneity of its chemical composition makes me expect with only too great assurance a rigorous monotony in the conditions of spirit and flesh that prevail throughout its inconceivably vast extent, and I have every reason to fear that all thinking beings are as wretchedly unhappy in the world of Sirius or the star-system of Altair as they are, within our own knowledge, on the Earth. But, you say, all this does not constitute the universe. Yes, I have a shrewd suspicion you are right ; I feel these immensities are nothing, in fact I am convinced that, if there is anything, that anything is not what we see.

Yes, I feel we live surrounded by a mere phantasmagoria, that our glimpse of the universe is purely the effect of the nightmare that breaks the restless sleep that is our life. And this is the worst blow of all. For it is plain we can know nothing, that all things combine to deceive us, and that Nature is only making cruel sport of our ignorance and helplessness.

## TO PAUL HERVIEU



AM convinced in my own mind that humanity has always identically the same total of folly and dullness to spend. It is a capital that is bound to bear interest in one way or another. The great thing to know is whether, after all, the imbecilities that time has consecrated do not form the best investment a man can make of his stupidity. Far from feeling glad when I see some time-honoured fallacy exploded, I think of the new one that will come and take its place, and I ask myself the anxious question,—will it not perhaps be more inconvenient and dangerous than the other? On full and sufficient consideration, the old prejudices are less baneful than the new; time, by long usage, has given them a polish and made them almost innocent.

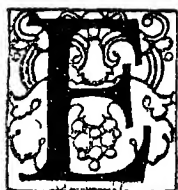




Men of action, who have the knack and taste for affairs, even in their best-concerted plans, reckon with the part fortune will play, well knowing that all great enterprises are uncertain. Soldiers and gamblers are expert in this calculation of probabilities, and learn to seize such chances as come their way without wearing out their patience waiting for the concurrence of them all.



WHEN we say life is good, life is evil, we are stating a meaningless proposition. We ought to say it is good and bad at one and the same time, for it is through it, and it alone, we have the idea of good and bad at all. The truth is, that life is delightful, odious, charming, repulsive, sweet, bitter, in fact that it is everything. It is like the harlequin of our friend Florian; one man sees it red, another blue, and both see it as it is, inasmuch as it is red and blue and all other colours. Here is a way to bring us all into agreement and reconcile the philosophers who are all tearing each other's eyes out. But there, we are so constituted that we *will* force others to feel and think as we do, and we cannot suffer our neighbour to be merry when we are sad ourselves.



**E**VIL is necessary. If it did not exist, neither would good. Evil is the sole potential cause of good. What would courage be without danger, and pity without pain?

What would become of self-devotion and self-sacrifice in a world of universal happiness? Can we conceive of virtue without vice, love without hate, beauty without ugliness? It is thanks to evil and sorrow that the earth is habitable and life worth living. We should not therefore be too hard on the Devil. He is a great artist and a great savant; he has created at least one-half of the world. And his half is so cunningly embedded in the other that it is impossible to interfere with the first without at the same time doing a like injury to the second. Each vice you destroy had a corresponding virtue, which perishes along with it.

I enjoyed the pleasure of seeing, one day at a country fair, the life of St. Antony the Great represented by marionettes. As a lesson in philo-

sophy, such a show beats Shakespeare's tragedies hollow,—to say nothing of M. d'Ennery! Oh, how vividly it brings before us the two things working together to one end,—God's grace and the Devil's!

The stage represents a horrid desert, to be peopled presently with angels and demons. The action, as it proceeds, impresses the mind with a grim presentiment of fatality,—an impression partly resulting from the symmetrical alternation of demons and angels as participators, partly from the gait and bearing of the characters, who are moved by strings manipulated by an invisible hand. Nevertheless, when, after his orisons, St. Antony, still on his knees, lifts his brow,—which has grown as hard and humpy as a camel's knees by dint of so many, many prostrations on the stones,—and raising his tear-worn eyes, sees the Queen of Sheba standing there before him in her golden robe, opening her arms invitingly and smiling at him, we shake and shiver with apprehension lest the Saint yield to temptation, and we follow with anguished anxiety the harrowing spectacle of his trials and tribulations.

The fact is, we all see ourselves in him, and when he has finally won the day, we feel ourselves personally interested in his victory. It is the triumph of humanity as a whole in its everlasting

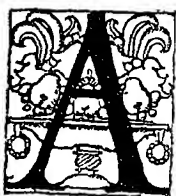
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strife and struggle. St. Antony is a great Saint only because he has successfully resisted the Queen of Sheba. Well, is it not obvious then, that in sending this beauteous lady, who hides her cloven hoof under a trailing skirt embroidered with pearls, to visit the Hermit, the Devil performed an act which was indispensably necessary to constitute his Saintship.

Thus the marionettes confirmed me in my belief that evil is an indispensable pre-condition of good, and the Devil a necessity to the moral beauty of the universe.



HAVE known savants as simple and unassuming as children, and every day we meet ignoramuses who deem themselves the axis of the world. Alas! each one of us regards himself as the hub of the universe. It is a delusion common to all mankind. The crossing-sweeper is not exempt. His eyes tell him so; as he looks around him, he sees the vault of heaven rounding him about on every side, making him the very centre of heaven and earth. It may be the presumption is a little shaken in the mind of the man who has thought deeply. Humility, a rare thing among the learned, is rarer still with the ignorant.



PHILOSOPHICAL theory of the universe is as much like its prototype as a sphere, in which merely the lines of latitude and longitude are traced, would be like the actual earth. Metaphysics has one admirable peculiarity; it takes away from the universe whatever it has and gives it what it had not,—a wondrous work no doubt, and a finer game, an incomparably nobler one, than draughts or chess, but, when all is said, of a like sort. The universe as plotted by the metaphysicians is resolved into geometrical lines, the arrangement of which is a diverting amusement. A system like that of Kant or Hegel does not differ essentially from those combinations of cards with which women foretell fortunes, and so cheat the monotony of their lives.



O think it is possible, I tell myself, as I read this book, to charm us thus, not with forms and colours, as Nature does in her happy moments,—which are few and far between,—but just with little conventional signs borrowed from language! These signs awake in us divine images. That is the miracle. A beautiful verse is like a violin-bow drawn across the resonant fibres of our soul. It is not his own thoughts, but ours, that the Poet sets singing within us. When he tells us of a woman he loves, it is our loves and griefs he awakes entrancingly in our souls. He is an evoker of spirits. When we understand him, we are as much poets as he. We have in us, every one of us, a copy of each of our poets which no man knows of and which will perish utterly and for ever with all its variants when we shall cease to feel and know. And do you suppose we should love our lyric bards so fondly, if they spoke to us of aught else but our own selves? It is all a happy misapprehension! The best of them



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are sheer egoists. They are thinking of themselves all the time. It is only themselves they have put into their verses—and it is only *ourselves* we find there. The poets help us to love ; that is all they are for. And surely it is a good and sufficient use to put their delightful vanity to. Their stanzas are in like case with women,—nothing more unprofitable than to praise them ; the best loved will always be the loveliest. As to compelling the public to confess the object of our special choice to be incomparable, that is a task better befits a knight-errant than a man of sober sense.



LIFE is an ordeal, a test,—so say the Theologians. I am sure I do not know ; at any rate it is not one we submit to voluntarily. The conditions are not laid down with sufficient clearness. In fact, it is not fair and equal for all. How can life be a test, for children who die directly after birth, and idiots, and madmen? Ah! these are objections that have been answered long ago. Yes, they are always being answered, and I am bound to say the answer cannot be very convincing, if it has to be repeated so often. Life does not bear the look, somehow, of an examination-room. It is much more like a vast pottery-works, where they manufacture all sorts of vessels for unknown purposes, a good many of which get broken in the making and are tossed on one side as worthless potsherds, without ever having been used. Others again are only employed for ridiculous or degrading ends. That is the way with us too.

## TO PIERRE VÉBER



THE fate of Judas Iscariot fills us with endless amazement. For, after all, the man of Kerioth came into the world to fulfil the prophecies; he was bound to sell the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver. And the traitor's kiss is, just as much as the spear and the nails all Christians venerate, one of the necessary instruments of the Passion. Without Judas, the mystery were not accomplished nor the human race saved. And nevertheless it is an established dogma with Theologians that Judas is damned. They base it on the words of the Christ: "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." This thought, that Judas lost his soul while working for the salvation of the world, has tormented not a few Christian mystics, and amongst the number the Abbé Œgger, Senior Vicaire of the Cathedral Church of Paris. The good priest, whose soul was full of tender pity, could not endure the idea that Judas was in Hell, suffering everlasting torments. He thought and

thought, and the more deeply he pondered, the more baffling grew his doubts and difficulties.

He came to the conclusion that the redemption of this unhappy soul was under consideration of the Divine clemency, and that, despite the dark saying of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, he of Kerioth was finally to be saved. His doubts were beyond bearing, and he longed fervently for enlightenment. One night, as he could not sleep, he got up and, passing through the sacristy, entered the great empty church, where the lamps of perpetual adoration were burning in the thick darkness. Falling on his face before the high altar, he began to pray :

“O God ! Thou God of love and pity, if it is true Thou hast received into Thy glory the most unhappy of Thy disciples ; if it is true, as I hope and would fain believe it is, that Judas Iscariot is seated at Thy right hand, command him to come down to me and proclaim to me himself the chiefest masterpiece of Thy clemency.

“And thou, whose name all men have cursed for eighteen hundred years, and whom I revere because, methinks, thou hast chosen Hell for thyself alone in order to leave Heaven free to us, scape-goat of all traitors and cowards and deceivers, O Judas, come and lay thy hands on me for consecration to the priesthood of pity and loving-kindness ! ”

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Then, as he lay there after his prayer was ended, the priest felt two hands laid upon his head, like the Bishop's at the ceremony of ordination. Next day he went to the Archbishop and announced his vocation.—“I am,” he told him, “consecrated Priest of Pity, after the Order of Judas, *secundum ordinem Judas*.”

And, that very day, M. Œgger set forth to preach through the world the Gospel of the Infinite Pity, in the name of Judas redeemed. His mission ended in mere misery and madness. M. Œgger turned Swedenborgian and died at Munich. He was the last and most gentle-hearted of the Cainites.



MONSIEUR ARISTIDE, who is a great sportsman,—a fine shot and a keen rider to hounds, saved a brood of young goldfinches just hatched in a rosebush below his window. A cat was clawing up into the bush. It is a good thing, when it comes to action, to believe in final causes, and hold that cats are made for killing mice or else for receiving a charge of lead in the ribs. M. Aristide picked up his revolver and fired at the cat. At first blush, one is pleased to see the nestlings saved and their enemy punished. But this revolver-shot is like all other human acts,—you somehow cease to see the justice of it when you look too close. Because, if you think of it, the cat, which had its sporting instincts like M. Aristide, might very well believe with him in final causes, and in that case feel quite sure goldfinches were hatched for him. It was a very natural mistake. The revolver-charge taught him rather late in the day that he was in error as to the final cause of the little nestlings twittering in the rose-bushes. What living being

but deems himself the end and aim of the universe, and acts as if he were so? It is the very cornerstone of life. Each one of us thinks the world has himself for its object. When I say us, I am not forgetting the brutes. There is not an animal that does not feel itself the supreme end for which things were created. Our neighbours, like M. Aristide's revolver, never fail to undeceive us sooner or later,—our neighbours, or just a dog, a horse, a microbe, a grain of sand.



**W**HATEVER wins its vogue only by some trick of novelty and whim of æsthetic taste ages fast. Fashions change in Art as in everything else. There are catch-words that come up and profess to be new, just like the frocks from the great dressmakers' in the Rue de la Paix; like them, they only last a season. At Rome, in the decadent periods of Art, the statues of the Empresses showed the hair dressed in the latest mode. Soon these coiffures looked ridiculous; so they had to be changed, and the figures were given marble wigs. It were only fitting that a style as rococo as these statues should be reperiwigged every year. The fact is, in these days when we live so fast, literary schools last but a few years, sometimes but a few months. I know young writers whose style is already two or three generations out of date, and seems quite archaic. This is the result, doubtless, of the marvellous progress in industry and machinery that carries modern communities along in its dizzy sweep. In



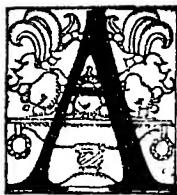
the days of MM. de Goncourt and railways, we could still spend a fairly long time over an artistic piece of writing. But since the telephone, Literature, which depends on contemporary manners, renews its formulas with an altogether disconcerting rapidity. So we will merely agree with M. Ludovic Halévy that the simple form is the only one adapted to travel peacefully, we will not say down the centuries, that is assuming too much, but at any rate down the years.

The only difficulty is to define what the simple form is,—and it must be allowed to be a great one.

Nature, at any rate as we can know her, and in an environment adapted for organic life, offers us nothing simple, and Art cannot aspire to more simplicity than Nature. Yet we understand well enough what we all mean, when we say such and such a style is simple, and such and such another is not.

I will say this much then, that if properly speaking there is no simple style, there are styles which appear simple, and it is just these that carry youth and power of duration with them. It is only left now to inquire whence they get this lucky appearance. Doubtless we shall conclude they owe it, not to the fact of their being less rich than others in divers elements, but rather because they form a whole in which all the parts are so thoroughly

blended that they cannot be distinguished separately. A good style, in fact, is like yonder beam of light that shines in at my window as I write, and which owes its pure brilliancy to the intimate combination of the seven colours of which it is made up. A simple style is like white light. It is complex, but does not seem so. This is only a simile after all, and we know what such parallels are worth when it is not a poet that draws them. What I wanted to make plain is this : in language, true simplicity, the simplicity that is good and desirable, is only apparent, and results solely from the fine co-ordination and sovereign economy of the several parts of the whole.



AS I cannot conceive beauty independent of time and space, I only begin to take pleasure in works of the imagination when I discover their connexion with life ; it is the point of junction between the two that fascinates me. The coarse pottery-ware of Hissarlik has made me love the *Iliad* more, and I can better appreciate the *Divine Comedy* for what I know of Florentine life in the Thirteenth Century. It is the man, and the man only, I look for in the artist. The finest poem, what is it but a replica ? Goethe has an illuminative phrase : "The only durable works are works of *circumstance*." But it is not too much to say that all works are works of circumstance, because all depend on the place and particular time when they were created. We cannot understand them nor love them with an intelligent love, unless we know the place, time, and circumstances of their origin.

A man is *ipso facto* convicted as a vain-glorious fool who supposes he has produced a work that can

stand alone and self-sufficing. The highest has value only in virtue of its relations with life. The better I grasp these relations, the more interest I feel in the work.



It is possible, and it is right, to tell everything, when you know how to do it. It would be so profoundly interesting to listen to a confession that was absolutely sincere! Yet since the world began, nothing of the kind has ever been heard. No man has told everything,—not even the fiery Augustine, more concerned to confound the Manichæans than to lay bare his soul, not even poor Rousseau, a great man, whom his own disordered brain led to vilify himself.



THE secret influences of daylight and atmosphere, the thousand pangs emanating from all Nature, are the ransom of sensuous beings, prone to find their delight in the shapes and colours of things.



INTOLERANCE is of all periods. There is no Religion but has had its Fanatics. We are all prone to unreasoning admiration. Everything seems excellent to us in what we love, and it angers us when we are shown the clay feet of our idols. Men find it very hard to apply a little criticism to the sources of their beliefs and the origin of their faith. It is just as well ; if we looked too close into first principles, we should never believe at all.



ANY people in these days are convinced that we have reached the last word of all the civilizations, and that after us the world will come to an end. They are millenarians like the Saints of the early Christian ages, —but reasonable, reflecting millenarians, in the taste of the period. It is perhaps a consolation of a sort to tell ourselves that the universe will not survive us.

For my own part, I see no sign of decay in mankind. I have heard talk about decadence, but I do not believe a word of it. I do not even think we have yet come to the highest point of civilization. I consider that the evolution of humanity is extremely slow, and that the differences in manners and morals that come about from one century to the next are, measured by a true scale, much less than is generally supposed. Only they strike us; while the innumerable points of resemblance we share with our fathers pass unnoticed. The world moves very slowly. Man has a natural



genius for imitation. He hardly ever invents. There is, in psychology no less than in physics, a law of gravitation that binds us down, as ever, to the ground. Théophile Gautier, who was a philosopher in his way, with something of the Grand Turk in his attitude of mind, would remark, with a look of melancholy, that men had not so much as managed to invent an eighth mortal sin. This morning, as I walked the streets, I saw some masons who were building a house, and they raised the stones exactly as the slaves of Thebes and Nineveh did. I saw a newly-married pair leave the church on their way to the tavern, followed by their friends and relations; they were accomplishing cheerfully enough rites that are centuries and centuries old. I met a lyric poet who stopped me and recited some of his verses, which he deems immortal; and as we stood there, horsemen were passing by along the road, wearing a helmet,—the helmet of the Roman legionaries and the Greek hoplites, the helmet of shining bronze of the Homeric warriors, from which still hung, to terrify the foe, the waving mane that frightened the child Astyanax in the arms of his “well-girdled nurse.” They were a detachment of the *Gardes Républicains*. Seeing these things and remembering how the Paris bakers still bake bread in ovens, as in the days of Abraham or of King Gudea, I repeated to

myself the words of the Book : " There is no new thing under the sun." And I ceased to think it strange to submit to civil laws that were already ancient when the Emperor Justinian embodied them in a venerable code.



HERE is one thing in especial that gives a charm to men's reflexions, —and that is a sense of disquietude. A mind that is not anxious I find either irritating or tiresome.



WE call men *dangerous* whose minds are made differently from our own, and *immoral* those who profess another standard of ethics. We condemn as *sceptics* all who do not share our own illusions, without ever troubling our heads to inquire if they have others of their own.



UGUSTE COMTE has by this time taken his proper place beside Descartes and Leibnitz. That part of his philosophy which deals with the mutual relations of the sciences and their several subordinations to each other, and that too in which he disentangles from the mass of historical facts a positive system of sociology, constitute from henceforth one of the most precious and fruitful possessions of the human mind. On the contrary, the scheme formulated by that great thinker, towards the end of his life, with a view to a new organization of society, has found no favour outside the bounds of the Positivist Church ; it forms the religious part of the work. Auguste Comte conceived it under the influence of a pure and mystical love. The woman who inspired him, Clotilde de Vaux, died within a year of her first meeting the philosopher, who vowed to her memory a cult to be observed for ever by his faithful disciples. The religion of Auguste Comte was inspired by love. Yet it is gloomy and tyrannical.

In it every act of life and thought is strictly regulated. It confines existence within a geometrical figure. All curiosity of mind is sternly reprobated. It tolerates only the useful branches of knowledge, and entirely subordinates intellect to sentiment. It is noteworthy, this! From the very fact of the doctrine being based on science, it assumes science to be definitely constituted, and far from encouraging the further prosecution of researches, it actually disapproves and censures any that have not for their object the direct advantage of mankind. This alone would be enough to prevent my donning the neophyte's white robe and going to knock at the door of the temple in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince. To banish caprice and curiosity, what ruthless cruelty!

What I complain of is not that the Positivists choose to forbid us all investigation into the essence, origin and end of things. I am quite content to remain for ever ignorant of the cause of causes and the end of ends. I have always regarded the books I read on metaphysics in the light of romances, more diverting than most novels, but not a whit more authoritative. But what does make Positivism so bitter and disheartening is the severity with which it bars the useless sciences,—which are the most fascinating! To live without them, would that be to go on

living? It will not suffer us to play at our own free will with phenomena and intoxicate ourselves with the vain shows of things. It condemns the agreeable mania for exploring the remote regions of the heavens. Auguste Comte, who taught astronomy for twenty years, was for confining the study of the science to the visible planets of our own system,—the only heavenly bodies, he declared, that could exercise an appreciable influence on the Great Fetish. That was the name he gave to the Earth. But, let me tell him, the Great Fetish would not be habitable to certain minds, if life on it were regulated hour by hour, and if no one was allowed to do useless things, as for instance to ponder on the double stars.



**I** MUST act because I live," says the homunculus that issued from Doctor Wagner's alembic. And, in very truth, to live is to act. Unfortunately, the speculative turn of mind unfits men for acting. The empire of this world is not for such as long to understand everything. It is a disabling weakness to see beyond the immediate object in view. It is not horses and mules only that need blinkers to keep them from shying. Philosophers *will* stop in the road and loiter out of the path, on an errand. The story of Little Red Ridinghood is a great lesson to Statesmen who carry the little pot of butter and are so much better for not knowing if there are nuts along the woodland ways.





THE more I think over human life the more I am persuaded we ought to choose Irony and Pity for its assessors and judges, as the Egyptians called upon the goddess Isis and the goddess Nephtys on behalf of their dead. Irony and Pity are both of good counsel ; the first with her smiles makes life agreeable ; the other sanctifies it to us with her tears. The Irony I invoke is no cruel deity. She mocks neither love nor beauty. She is gentle and kindly disposed. Her mirth disarms anger, and it is she teaches us to laugh at rogues and fools, whom but for her we might be so weak as to hate.



THE man will always have the crowd with him who is sure of himself as he is of the world at large. That is what the crowd likes ; it demands categorical statements and not proofs. Proofs disturb and puzzle it. It is simple-minded and only understands simplicity. You must not tell it how or in what way, but simply yes or no.



THE dead are very readily open to reconciliations. It is a good instinct to join indiscriminately in glory and affection the workers who, albeit enemies, yet worked in common at some great moral or social task. Legend brings about these posthumous reunions, which gratify a whole people's wishes. Legend possesses marvelous resources for bringing Peter and Paul and everybody into unison.

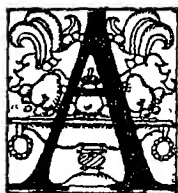
But the Legend of the Revolution has a hard task to get itself into shape.



THE love of books is really a commendable taste. Bibliophiles are often made fun of, and perhaps, after all, they do lend themselves to raillery. But we should rather envy them, I think, for having successfully filled their lives with an enduring and harmless pleasure. Detractors think to confound them by declaring they never read their books. But one of them had his answer pat: "And you, do you eat off your old china?" What more innocent hobby can a man pursue than sorting away books in a press? True, it is very like the game the children play at when they build sand castles on the seashore. They are mighty busy, but nothing comes of it; whatever they build will be thrown down in a very short time. No doubt it is the same with collections of books and pictures. But it is only the vicissitudes of existence and the shortness of human life that must be blamed. The tide sweeps away the sand castles, the auctioneer disperses the hoarded treasures. And yet, what better can we

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do than build sand castles at ten years old, and form collections at sixty? Nothing will remain in any case of all our work, and the love of old books is not more foolish than any other love.



VERY brief acquaintance with the savants is enough to show us that they are the least curious of mankind. Chancing some years ago to be in one of the great towns of Europe, I visited the Natural History Galleries under the escort of one of the Conservators, who described the collection of fossils to me with great pride and pleasure. He gave me much valuable information up to and including the pleiocene beds. But directly we found ourselves in face of the first traces of man, he looked another way, and, in reply to my questions, told me that was outside his show-case. I saw I had been indiscreet. One should never ask a savant the secrets of the universe which are not in his particular show-case. He takes no interest in them.



TIME, as it flies, wounds or kills our most ardent and tenderest sentiments. It tones down admiration, robbing it of its two staple aliments—surprise and wonder; it destroys love and love's pretty follies, it shakes the foundations of faith and hope, it strips bare of blossom and leaf every growth of simple innocence. At any rate, may it leave us pity, that we be not imprisoned in old age as in a charnel-house.

It is through pity we remain truly men. Let us not change into stone like the defiers of the gods in the old myths. Let us commiserate the weak because they suffer persecution, and the fortunate of this world, because it is written: "Woe unto you that laugh." Let us choose the good part, which is to suffer with them that suffer, and let us say with lips and heart to the victims of calamity, like the good Christian to Mary, "*Fac me tecum plangere,*"—Make me to lament with thee.



DO not be over chary in attributing to the artists of older days an ideal they never really had. No one ever admires a work of art without some self-delusion ; in a word, to understand a masterpiece is to recreate it in oneself over again. The same works are reflected diversely in the souls of those who contemplate them. Each generation of men seeks a fresh emotion in face of the productions of the old masters. The best-endowed spectator is the one who finds, at the cost of some fortunate misunderstanding, the purest and strongest emotion. Hence it is that humanity is hardly ever passionately attracted by works of art or poetry which are not in some part or degree obscure and capable of various interpretations.





VAST social changes are imminent, we are told ; the prophets confidently expect them, see them already come. This is a mistake the prophetic spirit is always prone to. Instability no doubt is the first condition of life ; all living matter undergoes ceaseless modification,—but imperceptibly, almost without our knowing it.

All progress, the best as well as the worst, is slow and regular. There will be no vast changes, and there never have been,—I mean rapid and sudden changes. All economic transformations have the kindly gradual operation characteristic of all natural forces.

Our social condition is the effect of those which have preceded it, as it is the cause of those that will succeed it. It depends on the former, as those that follow will depend on it. And this interconnexion determines for long periods the persistency of the same type ; this orderly succession guarantees the tranquillity of existence. True, it fails to satisfy minds that are set eagerly on novelties and hearts

that are athirst with love of humanity. But it is the order of the universe, and we must make the best of it. Let us keep a zealous heart and cultivate the needful illusions ; let us work at whatever we deem useful and good,—but not in the hope of any sudden and marvellous success, not buoyed up by any dreams of a social apocalypse ; all visions of the sort serve only to dazzle and deceive. We must look for no miracle ; but resign ourselves to do our own infinitesimal part in making the future better—or worse, the future we shall never see.



IN life we must make all due allowance for chance. Chance, in the last resort, is God.



PHILOSOPHICAL systems are interesting only as psychical documents well adapted to enlighten the savant on the different conditions which the human mind has passed through. Valuable for the study of man, they can afford us no information about anything that is not man.

They are like those thin threads of platinum that are inserted in astronomical telescopes to divide the field into equal parts. These filaments are useful for the accurate observation of the heavenly bodies, but they are not part of the heavens. It is good to have threads of platinum in telescopes ; but we must not forget it was the instrument-maker put them there.



WAS seventeen when I saw Alfred de Vigny one day in a public reading-room in the Rue de l'Arcade. I shall never forget the incident. He wore a voluminous cravat of black satin fastened with a cameo, and over it a turned-down collar with rounded corners. He carried in one hand a thin Malacca cane with a gold knob. I was very young, and still he did not strike me as old. His face was calm and kindly. His hair, turning grey but still fine and silky, fell in ringlets about his round cheeks. He held himself very upright, walked with short steps, and spoke in a low voice. After he was gone, I handled the book he had returned with feelings of respectful admiration. It was a volume of the *Collection Petitot*, the *Mémoires de La Noue*, I think. I found a book-mark left behind in it, a narrow slip of paper on which the poet, in his large handwriting, tall and pointed and reminding one of Madame de Sévigné's, had traced a single word in pencil, a name, "Bellero-

phon." Hero of mythology or historic ship, which did the name point to? Was de Vigny, when he wrote the word, thinking of Napoleon confronted with the limits of human ambition, or was he telling himself: "The ill-starred rider who bestrode Pegasus, has not, for all the Greeks have fabled, slain the terrible and alluring monster which, with sweating brow and burning throat and bleeding feet, we pursue so frenziedly, the Chimæra"?



PHILOSOPHIC melancholy has more than once found expression in words of gloomy magnificence. As believers who have attained a high degree of moral perfection taste the joys of renunciation, so the savant, persuaded that all about us is but vain show and pretence, drinks deep of this philosophic sadness, and forgets himself in the delights of a calm despair—a profound and noble mournfulness, which those who have once tasted it would not exchange for all the frivolous gaieties and empty hopes of the vulgar herd. Even objectors who, despite the æsthetic beauty of these thoughts, might be tempted to pronounce them a poison to men and nations, will perhaps suspend their anathema, when we show them how the doctrine of universal illusion and the flux of things arose in the golden age of Greek philosophy with Xenophanes, and was perpetuated through the ages of most refined civilization by the highest, the most serene and

sensitive minds, by a Democritus, an Epicurus,  
a Gassendi.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Gassendi, French philosopher, 1592-1655, opponent of the Aristotelian philosophy.





HERE is a little girl of nine who I am sure is wiser than all the sages. She said to me just now :—


“One sees in books what one cannot see in reality, because it is too far off or because it is past. But what one sees in books one sees badly or sadly. I think children ought not to read books. There are so many things in the world which are good to see, and which they have not seen,—lakes, mountains, rivers, towns and fields, the sea and ships, the sky and the stars !”

I am quite of her opinion. We have an hour to live ; why trouble our heads about so many things ? Why learn everything, seeing we know we shall never know anything ? We live too much in books and not enough in nature, and we are very like that simpleton of a Pliny the Younger who went on studying a Greek author while before his very eyes Vesuvius was overwhelming five cities beneath the ashes.



IS there such a thing as an impartial history? And what is History? The written representation of past events. But what is an event? Is it a fact of any sort? No! it is a notable fact. Now, how is the historian to discriminate whether a fact is notable or no? He decides this arbitrarily, according to his character and idiosyncrasy, at his own taste and fancy,—in a word, as an artist. For facts are not divided by any hard and fast line of nature into historical facts and non-historical. A fact is a something of infinite complexity. Is the historian to present the facts in all their complexity? That is an impossibility. He will represent them stripped of almost all the individual peculiarities that constitute them facts,—maimed, therefore, and mutilated, other than what they really and truly were. As to the mutual connexions of the facts one with another, what can we say? If a historical fact, so called, is brought about, as is possible, as is probable indeed, by one or more non-historical

facts, and because non-historical therefore unknown, how can the historian mark the relation of these facts to each other and their interconnexion? Then I am assuming in all this I am saying that the historian has under his eyes trustworthy evidence, whereas in reality he is constantly deceived, and he gives credence to such and such a witness only for sentimental reasons of his own. History is not a science, it is an art. A successful history can only be written by dint of imagination.

T is superb, a superb crime!" So wrote J. J. Weiss one day in the pages of a famous journal. The exclamation raised a storm of scandalized protest among the regular readers of the paper. I know of one worthy fellow, a magistrate and a well-meaning, kind-hearted old man, who next day refused to take in his copy of the offending sheet. He had been a subscriber for over thirty years, and he had reached an age when a man is not fond of changing old habits. Yet he did not hesitate to make the sacrifice to professional morality. It was, I think, the *affaire Fualdès* that had roused the writer to this burst of generous admiration. I am for scandalizing no man; I could not do it. It calls for a fascinating recklessness I do not possess. But I confess the master was right, and that it *was* superb, a superb crime.

Celebrated crimes have an irresistible attraction for all of us. It is not too much to say that bloodshed plays a great part, the major part, in the epic


of humanity. Macbeth and Chopart, surnamed *the Amiable*, are the heroes of the scene. The love of legends of crime and horror is innate in human-kind. Ask the children; they will tell you if Blue Beard had not killed his wives his story would not be half so entrancing. In presence of a dark and baffling murder case the mind feels a thrill of surprised curiosity.

It is surprised, because crime is of its very nature abnormal, mysterious, and monstrous; it is curious and interested, because in every crime it finds the same world-old motives of hunger and love, which are at the bottom of all our actions, good or bad. The criminal strikes us as a survival from a remote past, suggesting a horrid image of our savage ancestors of the woods and caves. The genius of prehistoric races lives again in him. He preserves wild instincts we thought abolished; he has wiles our milder manners know nothing of. He is stirred by primitive appetites that are asleep in us moderns. He is still a brute beast, yet already a man. Hence the feeling of indignant admiration he inspires in us. The spectacle of crime is at once dramatic and philosophical. It is picturesque, moreover, and fascinating by virtue of a hundred things,—odd, fantastic groupings, weird shadows thrown momentarily on walls, when all the world is sleeping, tragic rage, inscrutable looks

the mystery of which baffles and irritates. In country places, crawling on the bosom of mother earth, which it has fed with blood for so many centuries, crime is associated with the black magic of dark nights, the favouring silence of the moonlight, the vague terrors of wild nature, the gloomy expanses of field and flood. In town and lurking amid crowds it assails the nerves with a reek of poisoned air and alcohol, a nausea of putrid filth, and accents of unspeakable foulness. In society, I mean respectable middle-class society, where it is rarely seen, it dresses like us, speaks like us; and it is perhaps under this equivocal and commonplace aspect it takes the strongest hold on men's minds. Crime in a black coat is what most strongly appeals to the popular imagination.



OF all charms that touch our souls the most moving is that of the mysterious. Beauty undraped is no beauty, and what we love the best is always the unknown. Existence would be intolerable, were we forbidden all dreams. Life's best gift is the feeling it affords us of an ineffable something that is no part of it. The real helps us, more or less imperfectly, to frame some scrap of ideal. It may be this is its chiefest use.

“ES, it is a sign of the times,” we are for ever saying. But it is a very difficult matter to distinguish the true signs of the times. It requires a knowledge of the present as well as of the past and a wide philosophical outlook that none of us possess. It has often happened to me to note certain trivial events passing before my eyes as showing a quite original aspect, in which I fondly hoped to discern the spirit of the period. “This,” I would tell myself, “was bound to happen to-day and could not have been other than it is. It is a sign of the times.” Well, nine times out of ten, I have come across the very same event with analogous circumstances in old Memoirs or old History books. There is a basis of human nature in us all which alters less than we are apt to think. We differ, in fact, very little from our grandfathers. For our tastes and sentiments to change appreciably, the organs which produce them must be changed too,—and that is the work of ages.



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Hundreds and thousands of years are needed to modify some of our characteristics to any sensible degree.



WE have ceased to confine our belief within the old dogmas. For us, the Word has not been revealed only on the holy Mount the Scriptures speak of. The heaven of the theologians seems to us moderns peopled with vain phantoms. We know that life is short, and to prolong it, we add the remembrance of the times that are no more.

We have abandoned hope in the immortality of the human individual ; to console us for this dead faith, we have only the dream of another immortality, intangible and diffuse, only to be enjoyed by anticipation, and which moreover is promised only to a very few of us,—the immortality that consists in the memory mankind cherishes of us.



HERE is nothing else for us to do in this world but resign ourselves to circumstances. But the nobler natures know how to give resignation the fine name of content. High souls resign themselves with a holy joy. In the bitterness of doubt, amidst the general woe, under the empty sky, they still contrive to keep intact the antique virtues of the Faithful. They believe, they are determined to believe. Love of the human race warms their hearts. Nay! more than this; they cherish with pious care that virtue which Christian Theology in its wisdom set above all the rest, because it presupposes and replaces them,—to wit, hope. Let us hope then,—not in humanity, which for all its august efforts, has not abolished the evil that is in the world; rather let us set our hopes on the creatures our minds cannot conceive, that shall one day be developed out of mankind, as man has been evolved from the brute. Let us greet reverently these super-human beings of a future era. Let us found our

hopes on the universal pain and travail whose material law is transformation. Yes, we can feel this life-giving anguish working within us ; it is the impulse that urges us on our forward march to an inevitable, a divine consummation.



OLD men hold far too obstinately to their own ideas. That is why the natives of the Fiji Islands kill their parents when they grow old. In this way they facilitate evolution, while we retard its advance by founding Academies.



THE poets' world-weariness has its golden alleviations; no need to waste too much pity on them. These singers know a spell to charm away their despair; there is no art magic so compelling as the magic of words. The poets find consolation, as children do, in pictures.



**I**N love, men demand forms and colours ; they *will* have visible images. Women only crave sensations. They love better than we ; they are blind. And if you say : but think of Psyche's lamp and the spilt drop of oil, I reply, Psyche does not represent woman. Psyche is the soul. It is not the same thing ; indeed it is just the opposite. Psyche was curious to see, and women are only curious to feel. Psyche was searching after the unknown ; when women search, it is never the unknown they are in quest of. They long to recover something lost, that is all,—to recall something dreamt or something recollected, to renew some past sensation, nothing more. If they *had* eyes, how should we ever explain their loves ?

## **ON NUNNERIES**



**TO ÉDOUARD ROD**

## ON NUNNERIES



It is painful to see a young girl die voluntarily to the world. The Nunnery is terrifying to all who do not enter its doors. In the middle of the Fourth Century of the Christian era, a young Roman lady, Blæsilla by name, undertook such a severe course of fasting in a Convent that she died of the effects. The populace followed her coffin to the grave, shouting furiously: "Drive out, drive out this odious tribe of Monks from the city! Why do we not stone them? Why do we not throw them into the Tiber?" And when, fourteen hundred years afterwards, Chateaubriand, by the mouth of the Père Aubry, extolled the women who have "sanctified their beauty to the masterpieces of repentance and mortified the rebellious flesh whose pleasures are only pains," the Abbé Morellet, an old man and a philosopher, listened with impatience to this panegyric of the cloistered life, and exclaimed: "If this is not fanaticism, I ask the author to give me his definition of what fanaticism is!" What do we

learn from these interminable disputes, if not that the religious life alarms the natural man, but that nevertheless it has reasons for its existence and continuance? Neither populace nor philosophers always appreciate these reasons. They are deep-seated and touch the greatest mysteries of human nature. The Cloister has been taken by storm and its walls thrown down. Its deserted ruins have been repeopled afresh. There are certain souls that gravitate thither by a natural bias ; *claustral* souls they are. Because they are innately unhuman and pacific, they quit the world and go down rejoicing into silence and peace. Many souls are born weary ; they have no curiosity ; they drag out a sluggish existence without a wish for one thing more than another. Not knowing either how to live or die, they embrace the religious life as a lesser life and a lesser death. Others are led to the Cloister by indirect motives ; they never foresaw whither they were going. Wounded innocents, an early disappointment, or secret grief, has spoilt the scheme of things for them. Their life will never bear fruit ; the cold has blighted the blossom. They have realized too soon how evil the world is. They hide away in corners to weep. They would fain forget. . . . Or rather, they cherish their grief and set it in a place of shelter away from men and men's activities. Yet again there are others attracted to the Convent

by the zeal of sacrifice, souls that are eager to give themselves wholly to heaven, in a self-abandonment more ardent than love itself knows. These last, the smallest class of all, are the true brides of Christ. The grateful Church bestows on them the sweet names of *lily* and *rose*, *dove* and *lamb*, promising them, by the mouth of the Queen of Virgins, the crown of stars and the throne of purity. But we should beware of going further than the theologians warrant. In the Ages of Faith, there was no great enthusiasm about the mystic virtues of Nuns. I am not speaking of the people, who always looked upon the denizens of Convents with a certain suspicion and told facetious tales about them. I speak of the Secular Clergy, whose opinions were very mixed. We must not forget that the poetry of the Cloistered life only dates from Chateaubriand and Montalembert.

Another point to be considered,—religious communities differ altogether according to the varying conditions of period and country ; they cannot all be massed together in one and the same judgment. The Religious House was for centuries, in the West of Europe, farm, school, hospital, and library combined. There were Houses for the preservation of knowledge, others for the encouragement of ignorance. Some were designed for work, as others were for a life of idleness.

I visited some years ago the hill on which St. Odile, daughter of a Duke of Alsace, raised in the middle of the twelfth century a Convent, the memory of which has lingered ever since in the soul of the Alsatian people. She was a brave and good woman, who sought and found means to soften for those about her the curse of living, which then weighed sore on poor folks. Aided by clever fellow-workers of her own sex and served by numerous serfs, she cleared the ground, tilled the fields, reared stock, secured the harvests against pillagers. She was a special providence to the improvident. She taught the mead-drinkers sobriety, the violent gentleness, all men carefulness and good management. What resemblance can we discern between these robust, pure-hearted virgins living in a barbarous age,—these daughters of kings and tillers of the soil, and the dainty Lady Abbesses who, under Louis XV, went to Mass in paint and patches, and left a scent of *poudre à la maréchale* on the lips of the Abbés who kissed their fingers?

And even then, even in those scandalous days, when the Abbeys served as refuge and prison for the younger daughters of noble houses who had proved recalcitrant, there were good, pious souls to be found behind the bars of Convents. It so happens I have surprised the secrets of one of them. It

was last year at Legoubin's, the bookseller on the Quai Malaquais, amongst whose treasures I lighted on an old Manual of Confession for the use of nuns. An inscription on the title-page written in a formal hand informed me that in 1779 the book was the property of the Sœur Anne, a Nun of the Order of the Feuillantines. It was in French, and had this special peculiarity,—that each sin was printed on a little square slip attached to the leaf by the edge merely. While examining her conscience in the Convent Chapel, the penitent needed neither pen nor pencil to dot down her faults, whether grave or venial. All she had to do was to turn down the little strip mentioning any particular sin she had committed. Then in the Confessional, by help of her book, which she went through systematically from one turned-down slip to another, Sœur Anne ran no risk of forgetting any breach of God's commandments or the Church's ordinances.

Now, at the time when I discovered the little book on my friend Legoubin's shelves, I noticed that a number of offences showed only a single crease where they had been turned down. These were Sœur Anne's extraordinary sins. Others had been folded in again and again, so that the corners of the paper were all worn and dog's-eared. Here we had Sœur Anne's pet peccadilloes.

There was no doubt about it. The book had never been used since the dispersion of the Nuns in 1790. It was still stuffed with religious pictures and illuminated prayers, which the good Nun had slipped in between the pages.

In this way I came to know Sœur Anne's soul. I found it held only the most innocent of sins, and I have great hopes that Sœur Anne is seated to-day at the right hand of the Father. No purer heart ever beat beneath the white robe of the Feuillantines. I can picture to myself the pious sister with her clear eyes and stoutish figure, as she walks slowly up and down between the cabbage beds of the Convent garden. She is quite calm and self-possessed as her white hand marks down in her book her sins, which are as regular and as orderly as her life,—vain words, wandering thoughts in Chapter and in Church, trivial acts of disobedience, and greediness at meals. This last touch moved me to tears ; Sœur Anne was greedy at her repast of roots boiled in plain water ! She was not unhappy. She had no doubts. She never tempted God. Sins such as these have left no mark in the little book. She was a Nun, and her heart was in the Convent. Her destiny was in accord with her nature. That is the secret of Sœur Anne's good life.

I do not know, but I quite think there are many Sœur Annes at the present day in Nunneries. I

could find not a few things to say against the Monks ; I think it best to own frankly I am not very fond of them. As to the Nuns, I believe they have most of them, like the Sœur Anne, a conventual spirit, in which the graces of their estate flourish and abound.

Why otherwise should they have taken the veil ? In these days they are not driven into the Cloister by the pride and avarice of relations. They take the vows because they like to. They could repudiate them, if they chose ; yet you see they do not. The free-thinking dragoons we see in farces of the Revolutionary period breaking down Convent doors soon had enough of invoking nature and marrying the Nuns. Nature is of vaster scope than free-thinking dragoons quite realize ; she unites the sensuous and the ascetic both in her comprehensive bosom. For the Cloister, the monster must needs be lovable, seeing it is loved, and no longer devours any but voluntary victims. The Convent has charms of its own. There is the Chapel, with its gilded vessels and paper roses, a Blessed Virgin painted in the colours of life and bathed in a pale, mysterious radiance as of moonlight, the chants and the incense and the Priest's voice ; these are some of the most obvious fascinations of the Cloister, and they often carry the day against the attractions of the world.



After all, there is a soul in these things, and they contain the sum total of poetry certain natures are capable of. Sedentary by nature and disposed to a discreet, unassuming, retiring life, women are from the first in their element in a Convent. The atmosphere is cosy and comforting, a trifle stifling ; it affords the pious dames who breathe it all the delights of a long-drawn asphyxiation. They fall into a half-sleep, and soon lose the habit of thinking. This is a fine thing to get rid of. In exchange, they gain certainty. An excellent transaction, surely, from the practical point of view !

I do not lay much stress on titles such as the *bride of Jesus*, *vessel of election*, *immaculate dove*. Enthusiasm, mysticism, plays no great part in religious communities. The virtues jog quietly along a humdrum path. Everything, even including the sentiment of the divine, keeps a judicious course near the ground, attempts no heavenward flights. Spirituality is worldly-wise and takes a material form so far as it can, and the possibilities in this direction are far greater than is commonly supposed. The great business of life is so minutely divided up into a series of little trivial transactions that punctuality satisfies all needs. Nothing ever breaks the even thread of existence. Duty is reduced to its simplest terms ; the rule of the House

defines it. There is much in this to satisfy timid souls, gentle, tractable natures. Such a life kills imagination, but not gaiety of heart. It is a rare thing to see an expression of deep-seated melancholy on a Nun's face.

At the present day, we should search in vain in the Convents of France for a Virginie de Leyva or a Giulia Carraciolo, unwilling victims of a hated system, craving frantically for a breath through the Cloister gratings of the free air of nature and the world of men. Nor yet should we find, I think, a St. Theresa or a St. Catherine of Siena. The heroic age of the Cloister is gone for ever. The mystic ardour of an earlier time waxes faint. The motives that impelled so many men and women to adopt the monastic life have ceased to exist. In those times of violence, when a man was never sure of reaping the fruits of his labour, when he was liable to be awakened at any moment by the screams of the dying and the flames of burning homesteads, when life was a nightmare, souls of softer temper were fain to retire to dream of heaven in the Religious Houses that rose like great arks above the waves of hate and malice. But these days are past. The world has grown almost bearable, and people are more willing to stay in it. At the same time, such as find it still too rough and too insecure are at liberty, after all, to leave it. The

Constituent Assembly was wrong to dispute the right, and we have done well to allow it in principle.

I have the privilege to know the Lady Superior of a Community the Mother House of which is in Paris. She is a woman of excellent principles who inspires me with sincere respect. She was telling me, a little while since, about the last moments of one of her Nuns, whom I had known as a merry-hearted and pretty girl in society, and who had entered the Convent to die a lingering death from consumption.

"She made an edifying end," the Lady Superior told me. "She used to get up every day all through her long illness, and two lay sisters would carry her to the Chapel. She was praying there on the very morning of her release. A taper burning before the image of St. Joseph was guttering on to the pavement. She directed one of the lay sisters to set the candle straight. Then she threw herself back, heaved a deep sigh, and the death agony began. She received the last consolations of religion. She could only testify by the movement of her eyes to the pious satisfaction the sacraments of the dying afforded her."

The little narrative was given with an admirable simplicity. Death is the most important transaction of the religious life. But so good a preparation

for it is the existence of the Cloister that nothing more momentous is left to do at that hour than at any other. The dying Nun sets a taper straight—and expires. It was the one act lacking to round off the blessedness of a minute and meticulous piety.



HOW I DISCOURSED ONE NIGHT WITH AN  
APPARITION ON THE FIRST ORIGINS OF THE  
ALPHABET



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IN the silence of midnight I sat writing at my desk, where I had been so employed for hours. I pushed back my lamp, the shade of which left in semi-darkness the books that rise in tiers on all four walls of my study. The dying fire showed a few sparks still glowing like rubies amid the cinders. The air was heavy with the pungent fumes of tobacco ; in a bowl in front of me, on top of a little heap of ash, lay a last cigarette, from which its tiny column of blue vapour rose straight upwards. The shadows of the room were full of mystery, as one felt vaguely conscious of the soul of all the slumbering books around. My pen hung suspended in my fingers, and I was dreaming of very far-off days, when rising from the smoke of my cigarette, as from the fumes of a witches' cauldron, emerged a strange, weird figure. His ringleted hair, his long, flashing eyes,



his beaked nose, his thick lips, his black beard, close-curved in the Assyrian fashion, his clear bronze complexion, the look of guile and cruel sensuality that marked his countenance, the thick-set contours of his limbs, the richness of his flowing robes, all proclaimed one of those natives of Asia whom the Hellenes called Barbarians. He wore a blue cap shaped like a fish's head and dotted with stars. He was wrapped in a purple robe, and carried in one hand an oar, in the other writing-tablets. I was not disconcerted at sight of my visitor. What place more likely than a library to be haunted by apparitions? Where should the spirits of the dead appear, if not amid the signs that preserve our memory of them? I invited the stranger to be seated; but he took no notice.

"Let be," he addressed me presently, "and act just as if I were not here, I beg. I have come to look at what you were writing on that bad paper yonder. I like to watch you at work; not that I care one jot for the ideas you may be able to express, but the characters you trace interest me beyond measure. In spite of the alterations they have suffered in eight-and-twenty centuries of use, the letters that flow from your pen are not unfamiliar to me. I recognize that B, which in my day was called *beth*, that is to say *house*. Here is

the L, which we knew as *lamed*, because it was shaped like a goad. That G comes from our *gimel*, with the camel's neck, and that A springs from our *aleph*, in shape of an ox's head. As for the D I see there, it once represented as faithfully as the *daleth* which was its original, the three-cornered opening of the tent pitched on the desert sands, if you had not, with a cursive stroke, rounded the angular outlines of that emblem of an old-world, nomad existence. You have modified the *daleth*, as you have all the other letters of my alphabet. But I do not blame you. It was to go faster. Yes, time is precious. Time is gold dust, and elephants' tusks, and ostrich feathers. Life is short. Without losing one moment, we must be ever bargaining and sailing the seas, to win riches, that we may enjoy a happy and respected old age."

"Sir," I told him, "by your looks as well as your words, I know you for an old Phœnician."

He answered me simply :

"I am Cadmus,—the shade of Cadmus."

"In that case," I replied, "you do not exist, properly speaking. You are mythical and allegorical. For it is impossible to give credence to all the tales the Greeks have told of you. They say you slew, beside the fountain of Ares, a dragon whose jaws vomited flames of fire, and that having plucked out the monster's teeth, you sowed them in

the ground, where they changed into men. These are fairy-tales, and you yourself, sir, are fabulous."

"I may indeed have become so in the course of ages, that is very possible, and those big children you call the Greeks may have mingled fables with history, I can quite believe it; but I care not a jot. I have never troubled my head about what folk would think of me after my death; my hopes and fears never went beyond this life which we enjoy on earth, and which is the only one I know aught of even now. For I do not call it living to float like an empty shade in the dust of libraries and appear vaguely to M. Ernest Renan or M. Philippe Berger. And this phantom existence seems all the more mournful to me, seeing how my days, when I was alive, were the most stirring and busy any man could enjoy. I had no time to go sowing serpent's teeth in the plains of Bœotia, unless mayhap those teeth were the hate and jealousy roused in the bosoms of the shepherds of Cythæron by my wealth and power. I sailed the seas all my life. In my black ship, which carried at the prow a red dwarf of monstrous ugliness, the guardian of my treasures, observing the Cabiri who navigate the sky in their glittering barque, steering my course by that fixed star the Greeks named, after me, "the Phœnician," I ploughed every sea and touched at every shore; I went to find the

gold of Colchis, the steel of the Chalybes, the pearls of Ophir, the silver of Tartessus ; in Bætica I shipped iron, lead, cinnabar, honey, wax, and pitch, and pushing beyond the confines of the world, I ran on under the fogs of the Ocean till I came to the dim isle of the Britons. Thence I returned an old man with white hair, with a rich cargo of tin that the Egyptians, the Hellenes, and the Italiotes bought of me at its weight in gold. The Mediterranean in those days was my lake. I founded on its still savage shores hundreds of trading factories, and the famed Thebes was only a stronghold where I kept a store of gold. I found Greece inhabited by savages armed with stags' horns and split flints. I gave them bronze, and it was through me they learnt all the arts."

Both looks and words were imbued with an offensive hardness, and I answered him coldly :

"Oh ! you were a keen trader and a clever. But you had no scruples, and you behaved, on occasion, like a regular pirate. When you landed on a sea-beach of the Greek mainland or islands, you took care to spread a tempting array on the sands of gewgaws and precious stuffs, and if the girls of the countryside, drawn by an irresistible attraction, came down alone, without their kinsmen's privity, to gaze at the fascinating display, your mariners would carry off the maidens despite their frantic cries and

tears, and throw them, bound and shuddering, into the hold of your ships, under guard of the red dwarf. Did you not in this fashion, you and your men, kidnap young Io, daughter of King Inachos, to sell her in Egypt?"

"'Tis very likely. This King Inachos was chieftain of a petty clan of savages. His daughter was white-skinned, with pure, delicately cut features. The relations between savages and civilized men have been the same in all ages."

"That is true; but your Phœnicians committed thefts unparalleled in the world for odiousness. They did not fear to rob the tombs of the dead and strip the Egyptian burial vaults to enrich their necropolis of Mount Gebal."

"Upon my faith, sir, are these fitting reproaches to throw at a man of ancients like mine, one whom Sophocles, even in his day, called the Ancient Cadmus? It is barely five minutes we have been talking together in your chamber, and you forget altogether I am your elder by eight-and-twenty centuries. See in me, dear sir, an aged Canaanite whom you should not cavil at over a few mummy cases and a few savage wenches stolen in Egypt or Greece. Rather admire the vigour of my intelligence and the beauty of my industry. I have spoken to you of my ships. I could show you my caravans wending to fetch incense and myrrh from

the Yemen, precious stones and spices from the Harran, ivory and ebony from Ethiopia. But my activity was not limited to trade and barter. I was a cunning handicraftsman in an age when the peoples round me all lay fast asleep in barbarism. Metal-worker, dyer, glass-blower, jeweller, I exercised my genius in those arts of the fire and furnace that are so marvellous they seem magic. Look at the bowls I have chiselled, and admire the dainty cunning of the old Canaanitish artificer ! Nor was I less excellent in the works of the field. Out of that narrow strip of land confined betwixt the Libanus and the sea I made a very garden of delight. The cisterns I dug are to be seen there to this day. One of your masters has said : ' Only the man of Canaan could build wine-presses for eternity.' Nay ! sir, think better of old Cadmus. It was I carried all the Mediterranean peoples onward from the Stone Age to the Bronze. It was I taught your Greeks the rudiments of all the arts. In barter for corn and wine and hides which they brought me, I gave them goblets whereon were wrought doves billing and little earthenware figures, which they copied themselves afterwards, arranging them to suit their own taste. Above all, I gave them an alphabet, without which they could neither have fixed nor set down correctly their thoughts which you admire. Such the achievements of old

Cadmus. All this he did, not for affection of the human race nor any desire of empty fame, but for the love of lucre and in expectation of tangible and certain gain. He did it to win wealth withal, that in his old age he might drink wine out of cups of gold on a silver table amid fair, white women dancing voluptuous dances and playing on the harp. For old Cadmus believes neither in generosity nor virtue. He knows that men are bad, and that the gods, being more powerful than men, are worse. He fears them; he strives to appease them by bloody sacrifices. He does not love them; he loves only himself. I paint myself as I am. But remember this, had I not craved after fierce pleasures of the senses, I should not have toiled to grow rich, I should never have invented the arts you reap the joy of to this very day. And, a last word to you, my good sir,—seeing you had not wit enough to become a trader, and are therefore a scribe, and indite writings after the fashion of the Greeks, you should surely revere me as a god almost, seeing it is to me you owe the alphabet. It was my invention. Be assured I created it only for the convenience of my traffic and without the smallest inkling of the use the literary nations would some day put it to. What I wanted was a system of ready and rapid notation. Gladly would I have borrowed it from

my neighbours, being well used to take whatever of theirs suited my purpose. I make no boast of originality ; my language is the Semites', my sculpture is part Egyptian, part Babylonian. If I could have laid my hand on a good method of writing, I should never have been at the pains of inventing at all. But neither the hieroglyphics of the peoples you nowadays, without knowing anything of their true history, name Hittites or Hetæans, nor the sacred script of the Egyptians fulfilled my needs. These were slow and complicated modes, better fitted for tedious inscriptions on the walls of temples and tombs than for marking the tablets of a busy trader. Even when abbreviated and cursive, the writing of the Egyptian scribes still retained traces of the ponderousness, confusion, and vagueness of the primitive type. The whole system was bad. The hieroglyph, albeit simplified, was still a hieroglyph, that is to say, something dreadfully confused. You know how the Egyptians mixed up in their hieroglyphs, whether complete or abbreviated, the signs that stood for ideas with those representing sounds. By a stroke of genius, I chose twenty-two of these numberless signs, and made of them the twenty-two letters of my alphabet. Yes, letters,—that means signs corresponding each to one single sound, and providing by their quick and easy combination means of depict-



ing faithfully all sounds! Was it not truly ingenious?"

"Yes, no doubt it was ingenious, and even more so than you think. We owe to you a gift of incalculable price. For without an alphabet, no accurate record of speech is possible; there can be no style, and therefore no thinking of any precision and refinement, no abstractions, no subtle speculation. It would be as absurd to imagine Pascal writing the *Lettres Provinciales* in cuneiform characters as to believe the Olympian Zeus to have been carved by a seal. Originally invented for keeping a trader's books, the Phœnician alphabet has become throughout the whole world the necessary and perfect instrument of thought, and the history of its transformations is intimately bound up with that of the development of the human mind. Your invention was infinitely fine and precious, although still incomplete. For you never thought of the vowels, and it was those ingenious fellows, the Greeks, who hit upon them. Their part in the world was always to bring things to perfection."

"The vowels; yes, I will allow I have always had a bad habit of jumbling and confusing them together. You may very likely have noticed as much to-night; the old Cadmus has something of a throaty way of speaking."

“I can excuse it ; I could almost forgive him the rape of the virgin Io, for after all her father Inachos was but a savage princeling, whose sceptre was a stag’s horn rudely carved with a pointed flint. I could even forgive his teaching the Bœotians, a poor and virtuous folk, the frenzied dances of the Bacchantes. I could forgive him everything, for having given Greece and the world the most precious of talismans, the twenty-two letters of the Phœnician alphabet. From these twenty-two characters have come all the alphabets of all countries. There is never a thought on this earth they do not fix and preserve. From your alphabet, divine Cadmus, arose the Greek and Italiote scripts, which in turn have given birth to all the European types of writing. From your alphabet arose all the Semitic scripts, from the Aramaic and Hebrew to the Syriac and Arabic. Nay, this same Phœnician alphabet is the father of the Hymiaritic and Ethiopian and all those of Central Asia, Zend and Pehlevi, and even of the Indian alphabet, which has given birth to the Devanagâri and all the alphabets of Southern Asia. What a triumph ! What a world-wide success. There is not, at this present hour, on all the surface of the globe, one single form of writing that does not descend from the Cadmean. Whosoever in our world writes a word is indebted to the old Canaanitish merchants. The thought

makes me fain to render you the most signal honours, Sir Cadmus, and I cannot pay enough thanks for the favour you have done me by spending a brief hour in the dead of night in my study, you, Baal Cadmus, inventor of the Alphabet ! ”

“Nay, dear sir, moderate your enthusiasm. I am far from dissatisfied with my little invention. But my visit means nothing especially complimentary to you personally. The fact is I am bored to death since I have become a fleeting shade, and there is no more buying and selling for me either of tin, gold dust, or ivory ; nay, even on the subject of that Continent where Mr. Stanley followed my example in his paltry way, I am reduced to an occasional conversation with some savant or traveller who is pleased to take an interest in me. Hark ! I hear the cock crow ; farewell, and try, try to win wealth ; the only good things of this world are riches and power.”

He spoke, and vanished. My fire was gone out, the chillness of the night was getting into my bones, and I had a racking headache.

## **CAREERS FOR WOMEN**



## CAREERS FOR WOMEN



HAVE no sympathy with the gibes levelled by our farce writers at lady doctors. If a woman has a vocation for science, what right have we to upbraid her for following her bent? Can we blame the noble-hearted and wise and gentle Sophie Germain, who, in preference to the cares of household and family, chose to devote herself to the studious speculations of algebra and metaphysics? May not Science, like Religion, have her virgins and deaconesses? It is hardly reasonable to wish to make all women learned. Is it any more so to want to warn them off the domains of high thinking? And again, from a purely practical point of view, are there not cases where science is a precious stand-by for a woman? Because there are more governesses nowadays than are needed, are we to find fault with the young women who take up teaching as a career, in spite of the cruel futility of the prescribed studies and the monstrous unfairness of the examinations?

Women have always been credited with an exquisite tact in the management of the sick ; they have been known in all ages as sweet consolers and “ministering angels” ; they supply the world with hospital nurses and midwives. Then why refuse our approval to those who, not satisfied with the bare, indispensable apprenticeship, pursue their studies further and qualify for a medical degree, thus gaining increased dignity and authority ?

We must not let ourselves be carried away by our hatred of female preciosity and pedantry. Granted there is nothing so odious as a blue-stocking ; still we must draw a distinction in favour of the *précieuse*. Airs and graces are not always unbecoming, and a certain predilection for speaking well and correctly need not spoil a woman. If Madame de Lafayette was a *précieuse* (and in her day she passed for such) I for one cannot utterly abominate the class. All affectation is detestable, that of the dish-clout no less than that of the pen ; and there would be small enjoyment to be got out of life in a society such as Proudhon imagined, where all the women would be cooks and darners of stockings. I am ready to admit women are less in their element, and therefore less charming, composing a book than acting a play. Nevertheless, a woman who can write would not be justified in refusing to use her pen if its exercise does not

interfere with her life, not to mention that her inkstand may prove a good friend to her when she comes to take the difficult step that inaugurates the epoch of retrospection. There is no doubt of this : if women do not write better than men, they do write differently, and contrive to leave on the paper something of their own divine grace. For my part, I am deeply grateful to Madame de Caylus and Madame de Stael-Delaunay for having left behind them sundry immortal pen scrawls.

Nothing could well be more unphilosophical than to regard knowledge as entering into the moral system of a woman or girl like a foreign body, a disturbing element, an incalculable force. But, granting it is a natural and legitimate aspiration to educate young girls, it is very certain we have adopted a bad way of doing so. Fortunately we are beginning to recognize as much. Knowledge is the bond of union between man and nature. Like ourselves, women require their share of learning ; but by the methods chosen for their instruction, far from multiplying their points of contact with the Universe, we have separated and as it were fenced them off from Nature. We have taught them words and not things, and stuffed their heads with lists of names in History, Geography, and Zoology that by themselves possess no meaning whatever. The innocent creatures have borne their burden



and more than their burden of those vicious schemes of study which democratic self-complacency and bourgeois patriotism erected like so many Babels of priggishness and pedantry.

These wiseacres started originally with the ridiculous fallacy that a people is learned when everybody has learned the same things, as if the variety of human pursuits did not involve a corresponding variety of accomplishments, and as if a trader could advantageously know just what a doctor does! This misconception was fertile in mistakes; in particular, it gave birth to another yet more mischievous than itself. It was supposed that the elements of the special sciences were useful to persons *never intended to follow these up either in their applications or their theory*. It was supposed that the terminology of Anatomy, for instance, or Chemistry had a value of its own, and that it was a desirable thing to learn it quite independently of any use surgeons and chemists make of it. Surely as foolish a superstition as ever the old Scandinavians cherished, who used to write their runes and imagine there are words of power so tremendous that, if once pronounced, they will quench the sun and reduce the earth to dust.

A smile of pity rises to the lips as one thinks of generations of schoolmasters teaching children the words of a language their pupils will *never* hear or

speaking. They profess, these pedagogues, that this is the way to teach the elements of all the sciences, and diffuse a broad light over girls' minds. But it is only darkness they are disseminating, as any one can see for himself; to put ideas in these young heads, so malleable and volatile, a totally different method must be followed. Show in a few well-chosen words the main aims of a science, draw attention to its achievements by some striking examples. Deal in broad generalities, be philosophical, but hide your philosophy so skilfully that you appear as artless as the minds you address. Avoiding technical jargon, expound in the vulgar tongue all share alike a small number of great facts that strike the imagination and satisfy the intelligence. Let your language be simple, noble, magnanimous. Never pride yourselves on teaching a great number of things. Rest content to rouse curiosity. Be satisfied with opening your scholars' minds, and do not overload them. Without any interference of yours, they will catch fire at the point where they are inflammable.

And if the spark dies out, if some intellects remain unilluminated, at any rate you will not have burnt them. There will always be dunces amongst us. We must respect all natures, and leave in their native simplicity such as are made that way. This is especially necessary for girls, who for the most

part spend their time in the world in employments where the last thing called for is general ideas and technical accomplishments. I would have the education we give girls consist essentially in a gentle and discreet stimulation of the faculties.

MIRACLE



## MIRACLE



E should not say: There are no miracles, because none has ever been proved. This always leaves it open to the Orthodox to appeal to a more complete state of knowledge. The truth is, no miracle can, from the nature of things, be stated as an established fact; to do so will always involve drawing a premature conclusion. A deeply rooted instinct tells us that whatever Nature embraces in her bosom is conformable to her laws, either known or occult. But, even supposing he could silence this presentiment of his, a man will never be in a position to say: "Such and such a fact is outside the limits of Nature." Our researches will never carry us as far as that. Moreover, if it is of the essence of miracle to elude scientific investigation, every dogma attesting it invokes an intangible witness that is bound to evade our grasp to the end of time.

This notion of miracles belongs to the infancy of the mind, and cannot continue when once the

human intellect has begun to frame a systematic picture of the universe. The wise Greeks could not tolerate the idea. Hippocrates said, speaking of epilepsy: "This malady is called divine; but all diseases are divine, and all alike come from the gods." There he spoke as a natural philosopher. Human reason is less assured of itself nowadays. What annoys me above all is when people say: "We do not believe in miracles, because no miracle is proved."

Happening to be at Lourdes, in August, I paid a visit to the grotto where innumerable crutches were hung up in token of a cure. My companion pointed to these trophies of the sick-room and hospital ward, and whispered in my ear:

"One wooden leg would be more to the point."

It was the word of a man of sense; but speaking philosophically, the wooden leg would be no whit more convincing than a crutch. If an observer of a genuinely scientific spirit were called upon to verify that a man's leg, after amputation, had suddenly grown again as before, whether in a miraculous pool or anywhere else, he would not cry: "Lo! a miracle." He would say this: "An observation, so far unique, points us to a presumption that under conditions still undetermined, the tissues of a human leg have the property of reorganizing themselves like a crab's or lobster's

claws and a lizard's tail, but much more rapidly. Here we have a fact of nature in apparent contradiction with several other facts of the like sort. The contradiction arises from our ignorance, and clearly shows that the science of animal physiology must be reconstituted, or to speak more accurately, that it has never yet been properly constituted. It is little more than two hundred years since we first had any true conception of the circulation of the blood. It is barely a century since we learned what is implied in the act of breathing." I admit it would need some boldness to speak in this strain. But the man of science should be above surprise. At the same time, let us hasten to add, none of them have ever been put to such a proof, and nothing leads us to apprehend any such prodigy. Such miraculous cures as the doctors have been able to verify to their satisfaction are all quite in accordance with physiology. So far the tombs of the Saints, the magic springs and sacred grottoes, have never proved efficient except in the case of patients suffering from complaints either curable or susceptible of instantaneous relief. But were a dead man revived before our eyes, no miracle would be proved, unless we knew what life is and death is, and that we shall never know.

What is the definition of a miracle? We are told : a breach of the laws of nature. But we do



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not know the laws of nature ; how, then, are we to know whether a particular fact is a breach of these laws or no ?

“ But surely we know some of these laws ? ”

“ True, we have arrived at some idea of the correlation of things. But failing as we do to grasp all the natural laws, we can be sure of none, seeing they are mutually interdependent.”

“ Still, we might verify our miracle in those series of correlations we *have* arrived at.”

“ No, not with anything like philosophical certainty. Besides, it is precisely those series we regard as the most stable and best determined which suffer least interruption from the miraculous. Miracles never, for instance, try to interfere with the mechanism of the heavens. They never disturb the course of the celestial bodies, and never advance or retard the calculated date of an eclipse. On the contrary, their favourite field is the obscure domain of pathology as concerned with the internal organs, and above all nervous diseases. However, we must not confound a question of fact with one of principle. In principle the man of science is ill-qualified to verify a supernatural occurrence. Such verification presupposes a complete and final knowledge of nature, which he does not possess, and will never possess, and which no one ever did possess in this world. It is just because I would not

believe our most skilful oculists as to the miraculous healing of a blind man that *à fortiori* I do not believe Matthew or Mark either, who were not oculists. A miracle is by definition unidentifiable and unknowable.

The savants cannot in any case certify that a fact is in contradiction with the universal order, that is with the unknown ordinance of the Divinity. Even God could do this only by formulating a pettifogging distinction between the general manifestations and the particular manifestations of His activity, acknowledging that from time to time He gives little timid finishing touches to His work and condescending to the humiliating admission that the cumbersome machine He has set agoing needs every hour or so, to get it to jog along indifferently well, a push from its contriver's hand.

Science is well fitted, on the other hand, to bring back under the data of positive knowledge facts which seemed to be outside its limits. It often succeeds very happily in accounting by physical causes for phenomena that had for centuries been regarded as supernatural. Cures of spinal affections were confidently believed to have taken place at the tomb of the Deacon Paris at Saint-Médard and in other holy places. These cures have ceased to surprise since it has become known that hysteria

occasionally simulates the symptoms associated with lesions of the spinal marrow.

The appearance of a new star to the mysterious personages whom the Gospels call the "Wise Men of the East" (I assume the incident to be authentic historically) was undoubtedly a miracle to the Astrologers of the Middle Ages, who believed that the firmament, in which the stars were stuck like nails, was subject to no change whatever. But, whether real or supposed, the star of the Magi has lost its miraculous character for us, who know that the heavens are incessantly perturbed by the birth and death of worlds, and who in 1866 saw a star suddenly blaze forth in the Corona Borealis, shine for a month, and then go out.

It did not proclaim the Messiah; all it announced was that, at an infinitely remote distance from our earth, an appalling conflagration was burning up a world in a few days,—or rather had burnt it up long ago, for the ray that brought us the news of this disaster in the heavens had been on the road for five hundred years and possibly longer.

The miracle of Bolsena is familiar to everybody, immortalized as it is in one of Raphael's *Stanze* at the Vatican. A sceptical priest was celebrating Mass; the host, when he broke it for Communion, appeared bespattered with blood. It is only within

the last ten years that the Academies of Science would not have been sorely puzzled to explain so strange a phenomenon. Now no one thinks of denying it, since the discovery of a microscopic fungus, the spores of which, having germinated in the meal or dough, offer the appearance of clotted blood. The naturalist who first found it, rightly thinking that here were the red blotches on the wafer in the Bolsena miracle, named the fungus *micrococcus prodigosus*.

There will always be a fungus, a star, or a disease that human science does not know of ; and for this reason it must always behove the philosopher, in the name of the undying ignorance of man, to deny every miracle and say of the most startling wonders, —the host of Bolsena, the star in the East, the cure of the paralytic and the like : Either it is not, or it is ; and if it is, it is part of nature and therefore natural.



## **CARD HOUSES**



## CARD HOUSES



WHAT makes one mistrust the conclusions of æsthetics is that everything is demonstrable by reasoning. Zeno of Elea found that the flying arrow is motionless. One might equally well prove the contrary, though to tell the truth, that would be harder. For argument shies at ocular evidence, and it may be said generally that everything can be demonstrated,—except what we feel to be true. A consecutive train of argument on a complex subject will never prove anything but the intellectual capacity of the arguer. Men must surely have some lurking suspicion of this great truth, seeing they never govern their conduct by reason. It is instinct and sentiment lead them. They obey their passions,—love, hate, and above all wholesome fear. They prefer Religions to Philosophies, and only resort to reason to find justification for their evil inclinations and bad actions,—which is venial, if a trifle ridiculous. The most instinctive acts are as a rule those in which they succeed the best, and on



these Nature has based the preservation of life and the perpetuation of the species. The philosophical systems have flourished in virtue of the genius of their originators, without its ever having been within our power to recognize in any one of them distinctive marks of truth to account for their vogue. In ethics all possible views have been maintained, and if several appear to be in agreement, it is because moralists have, in most instances, been careful not to cross swords with the general sentiment and common instinct of mankind. Pure reason, if they had hearkened only to her, would have led them by divers roads to the most monstrous conclusions. This is seen in certain religious Sects and certain Heresies, whose founders, their brains turned by solitude, scorned the unreasoned consensus of everyday opinion. It would seem they reasoned very soundly, those Cainite doctrinaires, who deeming creation evil, taught the faithful to break deliberately the physical and moral laws of the universe, following the example of criminals, and taking as their chosen models Cain and Judas Iscariot. Their reasoning was right enough, yet their morality was abominable. Yes, this blessed and saving truth is found underlying all Religions,—that men have a more trustworthy guide than reason, and that we should rather obey the dictates of the heart.

In æsthetics, that is in the clouds, there is more opportunity and better ground for argumentation than in any other subject. It is a region where it behoves us to be especially mistrustful, where pitfalls lurk on every side,—indifference no less than partiality, coldness no less than passion, knowledge no less than ignorance, art, wit, subtlety, and simplicity that is more perilous than cunning. On æsthetic questions, oh! beware of alluring sophistries, the more alluring the more dangerous,—and there are many that might deceive the very elect. Distrust even the Mathematics; albeit so sublime and highly perfected, we have here a machine of such delicacy it can only work *in vacuo*, and one grain of sand in the wheels is enough to put everything out of gear. One shudders to think to what disaster such a grain of sand may bring a Mathematical brain. Remember Pascal.

Æsthetics rest on no solid foundation. It is all a castle in the air. It is supposed to rest on Ethics; but there is no such thing as Ethics. There is no such thing as Sociology; nor yet Biology. The complete round of the Sciences has never existed save in the head of M. Auguste Comte, whose work is a prophecy. When Biology is eventually constituted, that is to say some millions of years hence, it will perhaps be possible to frame a science of Sociology. This will be a

matter of many centuries ; then, and then only, it will be allowable to build up on solid foundations a system of æsthetics. But by that time our planet will be very old and coming near the goal of its fortunes. The sun, whose spots even now make us justifiably anxious, will then present to our globe *only a face of a dull, smoky red*, half smothered in opaque masses of scorixæ, while the last denizens of earth, cowering for warmth at the bottoms of mines, will be thinking less of discussions on the essence of the sublime and beautiful than of keeping alight in the subterranean gloom their last bits of coal, before finally perishing in the ice of ages.

Tradition and the general consensus of opinion are invoked as affording a basis for Criticism. But they are non-existent. True, an almost universal approval is accorded to certain works. But these results form a mere presumption, and by no means imply anything in the nature of deliberate choice or spontaneous preference. The works everybody admires are the ones nobody examines. Each generation receives them as a precious burden, and passes them on to the next without so much as looking at them. Do you really think there is much freedom of judgment in the approbation we accord the Classics, Greek and Latin, or even the French Classics ? Even the predilection

we display, as a matter of taste, for such and such a contemporary production, and our repugnance for another, are these really free and unbiassed judgments? Are they not determined by a host of circumstances foreign to the contents of the work under question, the chief being the spirit of imitation, which is so powerful both in men and animals? This faculty of imitation is necessary to enable us to live without going too utterly astray; we import it into all our actions, and let it dominate our æsthetic sense. But for it, opinions on questions of art would be far more diverse even than they are. It is through it that a work which, for any reason whatsoever, has originally met with some measure of approval, afterwards wins more and more voices. The first only were free; all the rest simply follow suit. They have no sort of spontaneity, or meaning, or value, or character of their own. Yet by their mere number they constitute fame. Everything depends on an insignificant beginning. So we see how works which are contemned at their birth have small chance of winning popularity later on, while on the contrary works that are celebrated from the start long preserve their reputation, and are highly thought of even after they have grown unintelligible. What proves clearly that this consensus is purely the effect of prejudice, is that it

breaks down when the latter is exploded. Numerous instances could be given ; I will mention only one. Fifteen years ago or so, in the examination for the privilege of only one year's voluntary service with the colours, the Military Board gave the candidates as a piece of dictation an unsigned page which was quoted in different journals and made fine fun of in their columns, rousing the ridicule of very cultivated readers. "Wherever did these military fellows," it was asked, "find such a farrago of uncouth and ridiculous phrases?" Yet, as a matter of fact, they had chosen them from a very noble book. It was Michelet, and Michelet at his best, Michelet in his finest period. The board of officers had taken the text of their dictation from that brilliant description of France with which the great Writer concludes the first volume of his *History*, and which is one of the most admired passages in the book. "*In latitude, the zones of France are readily distinguished by their several products. In the North, the rich low-lying plains of Belgium and Flanders with their fields of flax and colza, and the hop-plant, their bitter vine of the North,*" and so on. I have heard literary experts making merry at the style, which they supposed some old half-pay captain to be responsible for. The wag who laughed the loudest was an enthusiastic admirer of Michelet. The

page is an admirable piece of writing ; yet to win unanimous admiration, it must even now be signed with the author's name. The same may be said of any and every page written by the hand of man. Per contra, whatever is recommended by a great name stands a chance of being blindly praised. Victor Cousin discovered sublimities in Pascal which have since been recognized as errors due to a copyist. He went into ecstasies, for instance, over certain "*raccourcis d'abîme*," which only owe their existence to a mistaken reading of the text.<sup>1</sup> One can hardly picture M. Victor Cousin admiring the same expression in the pages of a contemporary writer. The rhapsodies of a Vrain Lucas were favourably received by the Academy of Sciences under the august name of Pascal and Descartes. Ossian seemed the equal of Homer when he was deemed an ancient bard. He is neglected now we know he originated with Macpherson.

When men admire the same things, and give each his own reason for so admiring, then concord changes into discord. In one and the same book they will applaud opposite qualities that cannot

<sup>1</sup> "Je lui veux peindre (à l'homme) non-seulement l'univers visible, mais l'immensité qu'on peut concevoir de la nature, dans l'enceinte de ce raccourci d'atome (un ciron). PASCAL, *Pensées*, I, 1., éd. Havet. Pascal wrote "*ce raccourci d'atome*," a rhetorical way of indicating the *ciron* or cheese-mite. The copyist made it "*raccourcis d'abîme*."—A. A.

possibly coexist together. It would form an extremely interesting book if one could have a detailed history of the variations of critical opinion on one of the masterpieces that have most occupied men's thoughts,—*Hamlet*, the *Divina Commedia*, or the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* fascinates its readers of to-day by a certain barbarous and primitive character we are quite sincere in believing we discern in it. In the Seventeenth Century Homer was commended for having duly observed the rules of the Epic. "Rest assured," wrote Boileau, "that, if Homer has used the word *dog*, the word is dignified in Greek." Such ideas strike us as ludicrous. Our own will perhaps appear equally laughable in two hundred years' time, for after all it cannot be set down as one of the everlasting verities that Homer is barbarous and that barbarism is to be admired. There is not in the whole range of literary criticism any single opinion that cannot easily be matched with its contrary. Who can settle finally the disputes of the virtuosos?

Must we therefore abandon æsthetics and criticism altogether? I do not say so; but we must recognize that we have to do with an art, and throw into it the passionate enthusiasm and agreeable charm, without which there can be no Art.

**IN THE ELYSIAN FIELDS**



**TO MONSIEUR L. BOURDEAU**

## IN THE ELYSIAN FIELDS



WAS suddenly caught away into regions of dumb darkness, amid which appeared vague and mysterious shapes that filled me with horror. Little by little my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and I made out, beside a river whose turbid waters rolled sluggishly along, the shadowy form of a man of a terrifying aspect. On his head was an Asiatic cap, and he carried an oar over his shoulder. I recognized the wily Odysseus. His cheeks were hollow and his chin covered with a long, unkempt white beard. I heard him moan in a weak voice :

“I am hungry. My eyes are dim and my soul is like a heavy smoke floating in the darkness. Who will give me a draught to drink of the black blood, that I may remember once more my vermilion-painted ships, my blameless wife, and my mother ?”

When I heard these words of his, I knew I had been translated to the Infernal Regions. I tried to direct my steps as well as I could by following the

descriptions of the poets, and I set off for a meadow where shone a faint, soft light. After a half-hour's walking, I came upon a group of Shades gathered in a field of asphodel and conversing together. The company included souls of all times and all countries, and I could see amongst them great philosophers side by side with poor savages. Hidden in the shade of a myrtle, I listened to their discourse. First I heard Pyrrho ask, with a gentle, deprecating air, his hands folded on his spade like a true gardener :

"What is the soul?"

The Shades who stood about him answered eagerly, all trying to speak at once.

The divine Plato said, with a look of subtlety :

"The soul is threefold. We have a very gross soul in the belly, an affectionate soul in the breast, and a reasonable soul in the head. The soul is immortal. Women have only two souls. They lack the reasonable."

A father of the Council of Macon answered him :

"Plato, you speak like an idolater. The Council of Macon, by a majority of voices, accorded, in the year 585, an immortal soul to woman. Besides, woman is a man, inasmuch as Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is called in the Gospels the Son of Man."

Aristotle shrugged his shoulders and replied to his master, Plato, in a tone of respectful firmness :

“By my reckoning, Plato, I count five souls in man and in animals : 1, the nutritive ; 2, the sensitive ; 3, the motive ; 4, the appetitive ; 5, the ratiocinative. The soul is the formative element of the body. It causes it to perish when itself perishes.”

Divers other views were propounded, each contradicting the other.

ORIGEN.

The soul is material and figurative.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

The soul is incorporeal and immortal.

HEGEL.

The soul is a contingent phenomenon.

SCHOPENHAUER.

The soul is a temporary manifestation of the will.

A POLYNESIAN.

The soul is a puff of wind, and when I saw myself on the point of expiring, I pinched my nose to keep my soul inside my body. But I did not squeeze hard enough. And I am dead.

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AN INDIAN WOMAN OF FLORIDA.

I died in childbed. They put my little baby's hand over my lips that he might hold in his mother's breath. But it was too late, my soul slipt between the poor innocent's fingers.

DESCARTES.

I proved conclusively that the soul was spiritual. As for knowing what it will be, I refer to Sir Kenelm Digby, who has written on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

LAMETTRIE.

Where is this Digby? Let him be fetched!

MINOS.

Gentlemen, I will have him carefully searched for in all the purlieus of Hell.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS.

There are thirty arguments against the immortality of the soul and thirty-six for,—*ergo*, a majority of six arguments in favour of the affirmative.

LEATHER-STOCKING.

The spirit of a brave chief does not die, nor yet his tomahawk nor his pipe.

THE RABBI MAIMONIDES.

It is written: "The wicked man shall be destroyed, and there will be left nothing of him."

<sup>1</sup> *Nature of Man's Soul* (1644).

ST. AUGUSTINE.

You are mistaken, Rabbi Maimonides. It is written : "The accursed shall go to the fire eternal."

ORIGEN.

Yes, Maimonides is mistaken. The wicked man will not be destroyed, but he will be diminished ; he will become quite small and imperceptible. This we must understand of the damned. And the souls of the Saints will be absorbed in God.

DUNS SCOTUS.

Death makes beings to re-enter into God like a sound that vanishes in the air.

BOSSUET.

Origen and Duns Scotus are wrong here ; their words are saturated with the poisons of error. What is said in the holy books of the torments of Hell is to be understood in the precise and literal meaning. Ever living and ever dying, immortal for the suffering of their torments, too strong to die, too weak to endure, the damned shall groan eternally on beds of flame, overwhelmed in furious and irremediable pangs.

ST. AUGUSTINE.

Yes, these verities must be taken in the literal meaning. It is the true flesh of the damned that

will suffer *in sæcula sæculorum*. Babies dead as soon as born or even in their mother's womb will not be exempt from these dire punishments. Such the fiat of Divine justice. If you find it hard to credit that bodies plunged in the flames are never consumed, that is the result of sheer ignorance, because you do not know that there are sorts of flesh which are preserved in fire; for instance, the flesh of the pheasant. I made experience of this at Hippo, where my cook prepared one of these birds and served one half for my dinner. After a fortnight I asked for the other half, which was still good to eat. Whereby it appeared that the fire had preserved it, as it will preserve the bodies of the damned.

#### SUMANGALA.

All the doctrines I have just listened to are black with the black darkness of the West. The truth is this: souls migrate into divers bodies before winning to the all-blessed *nirvaṇa*, which puts an end to all the evils of existence. Gautama went through five hundred and fifty incarnations before he became Buddha; he was king, slave, ape, elephant, crow, frog, plane tree, etc.

#### THE ECCLESIAST.

Men die like the beasts of the field and their end is the same. As men die, the beasts die also.

Both breathe the same breath, and men have nothing which the beasts have not.

TACITUS.

This language is conceivable in the mouth of a Jew, fashioned for slavery. For myself, I will speak as a Roman. The soul of famous citizens is not perishable. This we may well believe. But we offend the majesty of the gods by supposing them to grant immortality to the souls of slaves and freedmen.

CICERO.

Alas! my son, all they tell us of the Infernal Regions is a tissue of falsehoods. I ask myself the question: Am I immortal myself, otherwise than by the memory of my Consulship, which will endure for ever?

SOCRATES.

For my part, I believe in the immortality of the soul. It is a fine hazard to stake, a hope each man may enchant himself withal.

VICTOR COUSIN.

Dear Socrates, the immortality of the soul, which I have demonstrated eloquently, is primarily an ethical necessity. For virtue is a fine subject for rhetorics, and if the soul is not immortal virtue will not be recompensed. And God would not be God if he did not have a care for my French theses.



## SENECA.

Are those the maxims of a sage? Consider, oh ! philosopher of the Gauls, that the recompense of good actions is to have done them, and that no prize meet to reward virtue is to be found extraneous to virtue itself.

## PLATO.

Yet there are divine rewards and punishments. At death, the soul of the wicked man goes to inhabit the body of some inferior animal,—horse, hippopotamus, or woman. The soul of the wise man mingles with the choir of the gods.

## PAPINIAN.

Plato will have it that in the future life the justice of the gods must needs correct the errors of human justice. On the contrary, it is good that individuals who were condemned on earth to chastisement they did not merit, but which was laid upon them by magistrates liable indeed to err, yet duly appointed and of full competence to deliver sentence, continue to bear their pains and penalties in the Shades ; human justice is concerned in this, and it would tend to weaken it to give out that its judgment can be set aside by the Divine wisdom.

AN ESKIMO.

God is very good to the rich and very bad to the poor. This is because he loves the rich and he does not love the poor. And inasmuch as he loves the rich, he will welcome them in Paradise, and as he does not love the poor, he will put them in hell.

A CHINESE BUDDHIST.

Know that every man has two souls, one good, which will be reunited with God, the other bad, which will be tormented.

THE OLD MAN OF TARENTUM.

Oh ! sages, answer an old man, a lover of gardens : Animals, have they a soul ?

DESCARTES AND MALEBRANCHE.

No. They are machines.

ARISTOTLE.

They are animals and have a soul like ourselves. This soul is in relation with their organs.

EPICURUS.

O ! Aristotle, for their happiness, their soul is like ours, perishable and subject to death. Dear Shades, wait patiently in these gardens the time when you will lose altogether, along with the cruel

wish to live, life itself and its miseries. Rest yourselves by anticipation in the peace which nothing troubles.

PYRRHO.

What is life ?

CLAUDE BERNARD.

Life is death.

"What is death ?" asked Pyrrho further.

But no one answered him, and the group of Shades slipt away noiselessly, like a cloud flying before the wind.

I thought I was left alone in the meadow of asphodels till I caught sight of Menippus, whom I knew by his air of smiling cynicism.

"How is it," I said, "O Menippus, that these dead folk speak of death as if they knew nothing of it, and why are they as ignorant of human destinies as if they were still on earth ?

"It is, no doubt," Menippus told me, "because they still remain human and mortal in some degree. When they shall have entered into immortality, they will not speak nor think any more. They will be like the gods.

ARISTOS AND POLYPHILOS ON THE  
LANGUAGE OF METAPHYSICS

TO MONSIEUR HORACE DE LANDAU

## ARISTOS AND POLYPHILOS ON THE LANGUAGE OF METAPHYSICS

ARISTOS.



GOOD day, Polyphilos. What is your book? You seem plunged over head and ears in its pages.

POLYPHILOS.

It is a Manual of Philosophy, dear Aristos, one of those little works that bring the wisdom of the ages within reach of your hand. It reviews all systems, one by one, from the old Eleatics down to the latest Eclectics, and it ends up with M. Lachelier. First I read the table of contents; then, opening the book in the middle, or thereabouts, I lighted on this sentence : *The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute.*

ARISTOS.

Everything indicates that this thought forms part of a serious argument. There would be no sense in considering it as it stands by itself.

POLYPHILOS.

For that reason I paid no attention to what it might mean. I made no attempt to discover how much truth it contained. I devoted myself solely to the verbal form, which is in no wise singular, I doubt not, or out of the common, and which offers to an expert like yourself, I should say, nothing specially precious or rare. All one can say is that it is a metaphysical proposition. And that is what I was thinking about when you came.

ARISTOS.

May I share the reflexions I have unfortunately interrupted ?

POLYPHILOS.

I was merely thinking,—thinking how the Metaphysicians, when they make a language for themselves, are like knife-grinders, who, instead of knives and scissors, should put medals and coins to the grindstone, to efface the lettering, date and type. When they have worked away till nothing is visible in their crown-pieces, neither King Edward, the Emperor William, nor the Republic, they say: “These pieces have nothing either English, German or French about them ; we have freed them from all limits of time and space ; they are not worth five shillings any more ; they are of an inestimable value, and their circulation is extended infinitely.” They

are right in speaking thus. By this needy knife-grinder's activity words are changed from a physical to a metaphysical acceptance. It is obvious that they lose in the process ; what they gain by it is not so immediately apparent.

ARISTOS.

But how, Polyphilos, shall we discover at first sight what will assure gain or loss, as the case may be, in the future ?

POLYPHILOS.

I quite see Aristos, it would not be seemly to employ in this case the balance with which the Lombard of the Pont-au-Change used to weigh his angels and ducats. Let us first of all note that our spiritual knife-grinder has very freely ground down the two words *possess* and *participate* which occur in the sentence from the little *Manual*, where they glitter with all their original dross removed.

ARISTOS.

Very true, Polyphilos, they have left nothing contingent about them.

POLYPHILOS.

And in the same way they have polished smooth the word *absolute*, which concludes the sentence. When you came in just now, I was thinking two things about this very word, the word *absolute*.



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The first is,—that the Metaphysicians have all along shown a marked preference for negative terms, such as *non-existence*, *in-tangible*, *un-conscious*. They are never so happy as when they are discoursing about the *in-finite* and the *in-definite*, or dealing with the *un-knowable*. In three pages of Hegel taken at random, in his *Phenomenology*, out of six-and-twenty words, the subjects of important sentences, I found nineteen negative terms as against seven affirmatives,—I mean seven terms the meaning of which was not annulled in advance by some prefix reversing the essential signification. I cannot say if the same ratio holds good in the rest of the book ; that I do not know ; but the example will serve to illustrate a remark the accuracy of which can be readily verified. Such is the general practice, so far as I have observed, of the Metaphysicians,—more correctly the *Metataphysicians* (μετὰ τὰ φύσικα) ; for it is another remarkable fact to add to the rest, that your science itself has a negative name, one taken from the order in which the treatises of Aristotle were arranged, and that strictly speaking, you give yourselves the title : Those who come after the *physicians*. I understand of course that you regard these, the physical books, as piled atop of each other, so that to come after is really to take place above. All the same you admit this much, that you are outside of natural phenomena.

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ARISTOS.

Keep to one idea at a time, I do beseech you, dear Polyphilos. If you go jumping perpetually from one to another, I shall find it very hard to follow you.

POLYPHILOS.

Well, I will confine myself for the present to the predilection shown by these thought-distillers for such terms as express the negative of an affirmation. And the said predilection, I freely allow, implies of itself nothing abnormal or fantastic. It is no symptom with them of intemperateness, degeneracy, or insanity ; it merely satisfies the natural cravings of minds of an abstract tendency. These *abs* and *ins* and *nons* are more effective than any grindstone in planing down. At a stroke they make the most rugged words smooth and characterless. Sometimes, it is true, they merely twist them round for you and turn them upside down. Or else, again, they endow them with a mysterious and sacred potency as we see in *absolute* (*absolutus*), which is something much more imposing than *solute* (*solutus*). *Absolutus* is the patrician amplification of *solutus*, and a fine testimonial to the majesty of the Latin language.

That is the first remark I wished to make. The second is, that the philosophers, such as you, Aristos, who talk metaphysics, take care to select words for

this smoothing down process of theirs that had already, ere they touched them, lost somewhat of the original brilliance of their type and superscription. For it must be allowed that we too, we everyday folk, are not guiltless of the trick of filing down words, and little by little defacing their pristine clearness. And in so doing we are *Metaphysicians*,—without knowing it.

ARISTOS.

That last admission of yours, Polyphilos, we had best make a note of, that you may not be tempted later on to argue that the processes of metaphysical reasoning are not natural to mankind,—legitimate and in some sort necessary operations. However, proceed.

POLYPHILOS.

I observe, Aristos, that many expressions, as they pass from mouth to mouth in the course of generations, take on a polish, or as they say in the studios, "surface." Whatever you do, do not imagine, Aristos, that I am blaming the *Metaphysicians* because they go out of their way to choose for polishing such words as come to them a bit rubbed already. In this way they save themselves a good half of the labour. Sometimes they are luckier still, and put their hands on words which, by long

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and universal use, have lost from time immemorial all trace whatever of an effigy. My sentence from the little *Manual* actually contains two of the sort.

### ARISTOS.

You mean, I feel convinced, the words *God* and *soul*.

### POLYPHILOS.

You have guessed them, Aristos. These two words, worn and rubbed for centuries, have lost all trace of the design they originally bore. Before Metaphysics began upon them, they were completely "metaphysicized." Judge for yourself if the *abstractor* by profession is likely to let this description of words escape, words that seem and indeed are specially adapted for his use, seeing the unknown hosts of mankind have worked them smooth for ages,—unconsciously, indeed, yet with a genuine philosophic instinct.

Last of all, to meet the case where they deem themselves to be thinking what had never been thought before, and conceiving what had never yet been conceived, the philosophers coin new words. These of course issue from the mint as smooth as so many counters. But after all they have had to be struck from the old common metal. So here we have yet another factor to be considered.

ARISTOS.

You mean to imply by your last remark, Polyphilos, if I understand you aright, that the Metaphysicians speak a language made up of terms, some of which are borrowed from the vulgar tongue, for choice whatever words are most abstract, most general or most negative in it, the rest created artificially out of elements borrowed from the same source. Well, what then ?

POLYPHILOS.

Grant me one thing, Aristos, to begin with, viz. that all the words of human speech were in the first instance struck with a material type and that they all represented in their original freshness some sensible image. There is no term which was not primitively the sign of an object belonging to the common stock of shapes and colours, sounds and scents, and all the illusive phenomena whereby our senses are mercilessly cajoled.

It was by speaking of the straight road and the tortuous path that our ancestors expressed the first moral ideas. The vocabulary of mankind was framed from sensuous images, and this sensuousness is so bound up with its constitution that it is still to be found even in those words to which common consent has assigned subsequently a vague, spiritual connotation, and even in the technical terms specially

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concocted by Metaphysicians to express the abstract at its highest possible power of abstraction. Even these cannot escape the fatal materialism inherent in the vocabulary ; they still cling by some root-let or fibre to the world-old imagery of human speech.

ARISTOS.

There is no denying it.

POLYPHILOS.

All these words, whether defaced by wear and tear, or polished smooth, or even coined expressly in view of constructing some intellectual concept, yet allow us to frame some idea to ourselves of what they originally represented. So chemists have reagents whereby they can make the effaced writing of a papyrus or a parchment visible again. It is by these means palimpsests are deciphered.

If an analogous process were applied to the writings of the Metaphysicians, if the primitive and concrete meaning that lurks invisible yet present under the abstract and new interpretation were brought to light, we should come upon some very curious and perhaps instructive ideas.

Suppose we try, Aristos, to give back form and colour, to restore the original life and force, to the

words composing the sentence I quoted from my little *Manual* :—

*The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute.*

In this endeavour the science of Comparative Grammar will afford us the same help that the chemical reagent gives to the scholars who decipher palimpsests. It will enable us to see the meaning borne by these ten or a dozen words, not of course at the first origin of language, which is lost in the shades of a far-remote past, but at all events at a period long anterior to all historic record.

*Spirit, God, measure, possess, participate*, can all be referred back to their Aryan signification ; *absolute* can be broken up into its Latin elements. Now, restoring to these words their early and undefaced visage, this (barring errors) is what we get :—

*The breath is seated by the shining one in the bushel of the part it takes in what is altogether loosed.*

ARISTOS.

Do you suppose, Polyphilos, that any conclusions of importance are to be drawn from this rigmarole ?

POLYPHILOS.

There is one at any rate, to wit, that the Metaphysicians construct their systems with the frag-

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ments, now all but unrecognizable, of the signs whereby savages once expressed their joys and wants and fears.

ARISTOS.

In this they only submit to the necessary conditions of language.

POLYPHILOS.

Without raising the question whether this common fatality is a subject for humiliation on their part or something to boast of, I cannot help reflecting on the extraordinary adventures the terms they employ have gone through in changing from the particular to the general, the concrete to the abstract. For instance, the word *soul* or *spirit*, which was originally the warm breath of the body, has so completely altered its essential meaning that we can say: "This animal has no soul"; a proposition which strictly and literally signifies: "The creature that breathes has no breath." Again, the same title, *God*, has been given at successive periods to an appearance of the sky, a fetish, an idol, and the first cause of things. Well, there you have some really remarkable and startling vicissitudes for two poor vocables.

By this sort of precise examination of their past fortunes, we should be reconstructing the natural history of metaphysical ideas. It would be neces-



sary to follow out the successive modifications which words like *soul* and *spirit* have undergone, and discover how the present meanings have gradually been developed. This would throw a lurid light on the kind of reality these words express.

ARISTOS.

Why, Polyphilos, you talk as if the ideas we attach to a word, being dependent upon that word, were born and suffered change and died together with it ; and because a noun like *God*, *soul*, or *spirit* has stood successively as the symbol of several mutually discrepant ideas, you suppose yourself able, by studying the history of the word, to comprehend the life and death of the idea. In fact you make metaphysical speculation the slave of its own phraseology and liable to all the hereditary defects of the terms it employs. The attempt is so preposterous that you dared not avow it except in purposely ambiguous phrases and with evident anxiety.

POLYPHILOS.

My only anxiety is to know what limit there will be to the difficulties I suggest. Every word is the image of an image, the symbol of an illusion. Nothing else whatever. And if I convince myself that it is with the defaced and disfigured remains

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of ancient images and gross illusions that philosophers represent the abstract, *ipso facto* the abstract ceases to be represented to my mind; I see nothing but the ashes of the concrete, and instead of a pure, immaterial idea, merely the finely comminuted dust of the fetishes, amulets, and idols that have been destroyed.

ARISTOS.

But did not you say just now that the language of metaphysics was all completely polished down and as it were ground smooth on the grindstone? And what, pray, did you mean by that, if not that the terms then used are, so to speak, stripped bare, in other words, abstract? And this grindstone you talked about, what is it, if not the definition given to these terms. You forget the fact that in every metaphysical thesis the terms are precisely defined, and that being abstract by definition, they retain nothing of any such concrete associations as they took over from an earlier acceptance.

POLYPHILOS.

Yes, you define your words,—how? Why, by other words. Are they any the less therefore human words, that is to say world-old cries of desire or terror, uttered by unhappy beings in face of the shadows and lights that hid the veritable world

from them? Like our poor degraded ancestors of the woods and caves, we are imprisoned within our senses, which bound the universe for us. We believe our eyes reveal it to us, and all the while it is a reflexion of ourselves that these actually give us back. Furthermore, to express the emotions of our ignorance, what have we but the voice of the savage,—his stammering syllables a little better articulated and his howls a trifle mitigated? That, Aristos, is a description of all human speech!

ARISTOS.

If you condemn it in the philosopher, to be consistent, you must do the same with the rest of mankind. *Those who deal with the exact sciences* likewise employ a vocabulary which first took shape in the broken stammerings of primitive man, and which does not for all that lack precision. Again, the Mathematicians, who, like ourselves, discuss abstractions, speak a language which might no less than ours be traced back to the concrete, inasmuch as it is a form of human speech. You would have fine work, Polyphilos, if you chose to materialize an axiom of geometry or an algebraic formula. Do what you will, you will not destroy the ideal element. On the contrary, you would demonstrate, in the process of removing it, that it was there originally.

## POLYPHILOS

No doubt. But neither the physicist nor the geometrician are in the same case as the metaphysician. In the physical sciences and in the mathematical, the precision of the vocabulary depends solely and entirely on the relations between the word and the object or phenomenon which it designates. There we have an infallible standard. And as name and thing are both equally sensible, we can apply the one with certainty to the other. Here the etymological meaning, the intrinsic force of the term, is of no importance. The signification of the word is determined within such exact limits by the sensible object it represents that any other exactitude is superfluous. Who would ever dream of trying to affix a more exact precision to the idea given us by the terms *acid* and *base*, as these are understood by chemists? It would not be common sense therefore to examine into the history of the individual words that go to form the terminology of the sciences. A chemical term, once installed in the text-books, is not called upon to tell us of the adventures that befell it in the days of its frolic youth, when it ran wild in the woods and mountains. It has given up these frivolities. Itself and the object it designates can

both be embraced in the same glance and instantly and always confronted.

Again, you mention geometry. Yes, no doubt the geometrician speculates as to abstractions. But mathematical abstractions differ altogether from metaphysical, the former being derived from the sensible and measurable properties of bodies, constituting a system of physical philosophy. Consequently the truths of mathematics, albeit intangible in themselves, can in every case be compared with Nature, which, without ever entirely disengaging them, manifests that they are all involved in her. Their expression is not a matter of the language used ; it is conditioned by the nature of things ; it is implicit in the categories of time and space under which Nature manifests herself to mankind. Thus the language of mathematics, to be excellent, needs only to be governed by stable conventions. If each concrete term in it designates an abstraction, that abstraction has in nature its concrete representation. You are at liberty to say it is a rough and ready delineation, a sort of coarse, clumsy caricature ; but that does not prevent its being a sensible image, a tangible type of the said abstraction. The word is directly applicable to it, because it is on the same plane with it, and is therefore readily transferred to the purely intellectual concept corresponding to the sensible or material notion.

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It is *not* the same with metaphysics, where abstraction is no longer the visible result of experience, as it is in physics, no longer the outcome of speculation on the attributes of sensible nature, as it is in mathematics, but simply and solely the product of an operation of the mind, which extracts from a thing certain qualities,—qualities intelligible and conceivable for itself alone. Of these all we know is that the mind has framed a concept of them, which concept it makes known only by way of the language in which it describes them; in other words they have no guarantee of existence save and except the bare phrase. If these same abstractions do veritably exist in and by themselves, they reside in a region accessible to pure intelligence alone, they inhabit a world which you call the absolute as contra-distinguished from an opposite of which I will merely say that in your sense of the word it is not absolute. And if these two worlds are implicit one in the other, well! that is their affair, not mine. It is enough for me to possess the assurance that one is sensible and the other is not; that the sensible is not intelligible, and the intelligible is not sensible. Consequently word and thing can never coincide with one another, not being in the same place; it is impossible they should ever take account of each other, not being parts of the same world. Metaphysically, either the word is the

whole thing, or it has nothing to do with the thing.

For it to be otherwise, there would have to be words absolutely abstract and free of all taint of sensuous association; and there are none such. The words we call abstract are so only by being made so of deliberate intent. They play the part of the abstract, just as an actor represents the Ghost in *Hamlet*.

#### ARISTOS.

You raise difficulties where there were none before. *Pari passu* as the mind has abstracted, or, if you prefer it, decomposed, and as you said just now, distilled nature to extract the essence, it has in like fashion abstracted, decomposed, distilled words, in order to represent thereby the product of its transcendental operations. Whence it comes that the sign is exactly coincident with the object.

#### POLYPHILOS.

But, Aristos, I have fully proved to you, and from divers points of view, that the abstract in words is only a lesser concrete. The concrete, fined down and extenuated, is still the concrete. We must not commit the blunder some women fall into, who because they are thin, pose as pure, immaterial spirits. You are like children who take

a twig of elder and keep only the pith to make little figures of. Their mannikins are small and light, but they are made of elder for all that. Similarly, your so-called abstract terms have merely become something less concrete. If you take them as being purely abstract and withdrawn entirely outside their true and proper nature, you do so by mere arbitrary convention. But, if the ideas represented by these words are not themselves mere conventions, if they are realized anywhere else than in yourselves, if they exist in the absolute, or in any other imaginary place you choose to name, if in one word they "are," then they are incapable of verbal enunciation, they remain ineffable. To name them is to deny their existence; to express them is to destroy them. For, the concrete word being the symbol of the abstract idea, the latter is no sooner phrased than it becomes concrete, and then all the quintessence is gone!

ARISTOS.

But if I tell you that, for the idea equally with the word, the abstract is only a lesser concrete, your argument falls through.

POLYPHILOS.

You will never say such a thing. It would mean the ruin of metaphysics root and branch, and an



intolerable injury to the soul, to God, and eventually to His professors. I am quite aware Hegel said the concrete was the abstract, and the abstract the concrete. But then that thinker has turned your science upside down. You will allow, Aristos, were it only to keep to the rules of the game, that the abstract is the opposite of the concrete. Now, the concrete word cannot be the sign of the abstract idea. At most it might be the symbol, or, to put it better, the allegory. The sign designates the object and recalls it to memory. It has no proper value of its own. The symbol, on the other hand, stands for the object. It does not point it out, it represents it. It does not recall it, it copies it. It is a picture. It has a reality of its own and a distinctive signification. Wherefore I was on the right road when I investigated the meanings inherent in the words *spirit*, *God*, *absolute*, which are symbols and not signs.

*"The spirit possesses God in proportion as it participates in the absolute."*

What is this if not a collection of little symbols, much worn and defaced, I admit, symbols which have lost their original brilliance and picturesqueness, but which still, by the nature of things, remain symbols? The image is reduced to the schema; but the schema is still the image. And I have been able, without sacrificing fidelity, to

substitute one for the other. In this way I have arrived at the following :—

*“The breath is seated by the shining one in the bushel of the part it takes in what is altogether loosed (or subtle),”* whence we easily get as a next step : *“He whose breath is a sign of life, man that is, will find a place (no doubt, after the breath has been exhaled) in the divine fire, source and home of life, and this place will be meted out to him according to the virtue that has been given him (by the demons, I imagine) of sending abroad this warm breath, this little invisible soul, across the free expanse (the blue of the sky, most likely).”*

And now observe, the phrase has acquired quite the ring of some fragment of a Vedic hymn, and smacks of ancient Oriental mythology. I cannot answer for having restored this primitive myth in full accordance with the strict laws governing language. But no matter for that. Enough if we are seen to have found symbols and a myth in a sentence that was essentially symbolical and mythical, inasmuch as it was metaphysical.

I think I have at least made you realize one thing, Aristos,—that any expression of an abstract idea can only be an allegory. By an odd fate, the very metaphysicians who think to escape the world of appearances, are constrained to live perpetually in allegory. A sorry sort of poets, they

dim the colours of the ancient fables, and are themselves but gatherers of fables. Their output is mythology, an anæmic mythology without body or blood.

ARISTOS.

Good-bye, dear Polyphilos. I leave you unconvinced. If only you had reasoned by the rules, I could have rebutted your arguments quite easily.

## THE PRIORY

**TO TEODOR DE WYZEWA**

## THE PRIORY



FOUND my friend Jean at the 'old Priory, in the ruins of which he has made himself a home for the last ten years. He received me with the quiet cheerfulness of a hermit delivered from our human hopes and fears, and led me down to the unkempt orchard where every morning he smokes his clay pipe among his moss-grown plum trees. There we sat down to wait for *déjeuner* on a bench in front of a rickety table, under a crumbling wall where the soapwort swings the rosy clusters of its flowers, faded and fresh at the same time. The light of a rainy sky trembled in the leaves of the poplars that whispered by the roadside. Clouds of a pearly grey drifted above our heads, with a suggestion of gentle but incurable melancholy.

Remembering his manners, Jean asked me news of the state of my health and affairs ; then he began in a slow voice and with puckered brows :

“Though I never read as a rule, my ignorance is not so closely guarded but that I came acquainted

in my hermitage, which you jeered at in former days, on the second page of a newspaper with a prophet wise enough and well-meaning enough to teach that science and intellectual effort are the source and fountain-head, the well and reservoir of all the ills men suffer. This seer, if I remember right, maintained that, to make life innocent and even amiable, all that was needed was to renounce reflexion and the acquisition of knowledge, and that the only happiness in the world is to be found in a sympathetic, unreasoning charity. Wise precepts, salutary maxims, whose only fault lay in their enunciator having expressed them at all and been so weak as to set them out in fine phrases, without seeing that to combat art with art and intellect with intellect is to condemn oneself only to win the cause for intellect and art. You will do me the justice, old friend, to admit that I have not fallen into this pitiful contradiction, and that I have entirely given up thinking and writing ever since the day I realized that thought is an evil and writing a curse. This wise conviction I reached, as you know, in 1882, after the publication of a little book of philosophy that had cost me a thousand pains and which the philosophers condemned because it was written in a graceful style. In it I went to prove that the universe is unintelligible, and I was angry when I was told that as

a matter of fact I had not understood it. Thereupon I was for defending my book ; but on re-reading it, I failed to recover its precise meaning. I saw that I was as obscure as the greatest metaphysicians, and that the world was treating me most unjustly in not awarding me some portion of the admiration they excite. This finally and completely weaned me from transcendental speculations. I turned to the sciences of observation and studied physiology. Its principles are fairly well established, as they have been for thirty years now. They consist in fixing a frog neatly with pins on a little slab of cork and opening it up to observe the nerves and heart, which by the by is double. But I realized very soon that, by these methods, it would need far more time than life has to give to discover the deep-laid secret of living things. I felt the vanity of pure science, which, embracing only an infinitely minute fraction of the phenomena, is confronted with too limited a number of relations to build up any solid system. I thought for a moment of throwing myself into industrial pursuits. My natural kindness of heart prevented me. There is no form of enterprise of which we can say beforehand whether it will do more good than harm. Christopher Columbus, who lived and died like a saint and wore the habit of the good St. Francis, would certainly never have sought out the



way to the Indies if he had foreseen that his discovery would lead to the massacre of so many nations of red-skins, vicious and cruel men no doubt, but still capable of feeling pain, and that he would introduce into the Old World, along with the gold of the New, diseases and crimes hitherto unknown. I shuddered when people, very honest people too, invited me to interest myself in big guns and fire-arms and high explosives, which had won them money and distinctions. My doubts became a certainty, that civilization, as it is called, was nothing more than scientific barbarism, and I made up my mind to turn savage. I found no difficulty in putting my design into practice in this remote little district, lying thirty leagues away from Paris and declining in population every day. You saw in the village street houses standing empty and going to ruin. The peasants' sons, one and all, make for the towns, abandoning a countryside where properties are so minutely subdivided that they can no longer make a living wage.

"The day seems coming when a clever speculator will buy up all these lands and re-establish large landholding, and we shall very likely see the small cultivator disappear from the country, as even now the small tradesman tends to disappear from the big towns. This must be as it will. I care nothing one way or the other. I have paid down

six thousand francs and bought the remains of an old Priory, with a fine stone staircase, a round tower and this orchard, which I leave to go waste. There I spend my time in watching the clouds in the sky, or in the grass the white spindles of the wild carrot. That is surely better than dissecting frogs or creating a new model of torpedo-boat.

"When the night is fine, if I am awake, I gaze at the stars, which I am fond of looking at now that I have forgotten their names. I see no visitors, I think of nothing. I have been at no pains whether to attract you to my retreat or keep you away.

"I am happy to offer you an omelette, wine, and tobacco. But I tell you frankly it is still more agreeable to me to give my dog, my rabbits and pigeons their daily bread, which renews their vigour. *They* will not turn it to bad uses in writing novels that disturb men's minds or textbooks of physiology that poison existence."

At this moment a fine-looking girl, with red cheeks and light blue eyes, brought us eggs and a bottle of light red wine. I asked my friend Jean if he hated arts and letters as cordially as he did the sciences.

"Oh, no!" he assured me; "there is a childish element in the arts which disarms strong dislike. They are infants' games. Painters and sculptors

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are daubers of pretty pictures and makers of dolls. That is all ; and what great harm is there in that ? We ought even to feel grateful to the poets for only using words after they have stripped them of all serious meaning, if only the poor fellows who follow this amusement did not take their work, as they call it, seriously, and if it did not make them odiously selfish, irritable, jealous and envious, a sort of crack-brained lunatics. They actually expect to reap renown from this foolish trumpery. This is proof positive of their insanity. For of all the hallucinations that can spring from a sick brain, surely the desire of fame is the most grotesque and mischievous. I can only pity them. Here the labourers sing at the plough the old songs their fathers sang ; the shepherds, sitting on the hill-sides, carve with their knives little figures out of boxwood roots, and the housewives knead loaves for fête days in the shape of doves. These are innocent arts, which no poisonous pride envenoms. They are easy and proportioned to human feebleness. On the contrary, the arts of the towns demand effort, and every effort results in pain.

“But what above all afflicts and hideously disfigures and deforms our fellow-creatures is Science, which brings them into relations with objects to which they are out of all proportion and distorts the true conditions of their intercourse with nature.

It provokes them to understand, when it is manifest that an animal is made to feel and not to understand ; it develops the brain, which is a useless organ, at the expense of the useful organs which we possess in common with the beasts ; it turns us against enjoyment, for which we experience an instinctive craving ; it tortures us with terrifying illusions, showing us horrors that only exist by its instrumentality ; it establishes our pettiness by measuring the heavenly bodies, the shortness of life by calculating the antiquity of the world, our helplessness by leading us to suspect what we can neither see nor touch, our ignorance by bringing us up continually against the unknowable, and our wretchedness by multiplying our subjects of curiosity without supplying answers.

“I am not speaking of its purely speculative researches. When it goes on to practical applications, its inventions are only new and ingenious instruments of torture, machines in which unhappy human beings are done to death. Visit any manufacturing town or go down into a mine, and say if the sights you see do not exceed all that the most ferocious theologians have imagined of Hell. Yet, on reflexion, it may be doubted if the products of industry are not less hurtful to the poor who manufacture them than they are to the rich who use them, and whether, of all the ills of life,

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luxury is not the worst. I have known people of all social conditions; I have met none so wretched as a lady of position in Paris, a young and pretty woman, who spends fifty thousand francs every year on her dresses. It is a state of things that leads to incurable neurosis."

The good-looking country-girl with the clear eyes poured us out our coffee with an air of contented stolidity.

My friend Jean pointed to her with the stem of his pipe, which he had just filled, and—

"Look at that girl," he said; "she lives on bread and bacon, and no longer ago than yesterday she was carrying trusses of straw on a pitchfork; you can see bits of it in her hair now. She is happy and innocent in all she does. For it is science and civilization have created sin as well as disease. I am almost as happy as she is, being almost as stupid. Thinking about nothing, I never torment my wits. Doing nothing, I am not afraid of doing ill. I do not even till my garden, for fear of performing an act the consequences of which I could not calculate. In this way, I enjoy perfect peace of mind."

"In your place," I told him, "I should not feel the same security. You cannot have so completely crushed out all knowledge, thought and action in yourself as to taste a genuine tranquillity. Mind this: do what we will, to live is to act. The con-

sequences of a scientific discovery or invention alarm you, because they are incalculable. But the simplest thought, the most instinctive act, likewise involves incalculable consequences. You pay a great compliment to intellect, science and industry in thinking they only are concerned in weaving the web of men's destinies. Many a mesh is framed by unconscious forces. Can we foretell the effect of the tiniest pebble dislodged from a mountain side? It may modify the lot of humanity more notably than the publication of the *Novum Organum*, or the discovery of electricity.

"It was an act neither original nor deeply pondered, nor surely of a scientific sort, to which Alexander or Napoleon owed their appearance in the world. Yet millions of human destinies were involved. Do we even know the value and true meaning of what we do? There is a tale in the *Arabian Nights* to which I cannot somehow help attaching a philosophical interpretation. I mean the story of the Arab merchant who, on his way back from a pilgrimage to Mecca, seats himself on the margin of a spring to eat dates, the stones of which he tosses up in the air. One of these date-stones kills an invisible being, the son of a Genie. The poor man never dreamt he could do so much with a date-stone, and when he was informed of the crime he had committed, he was dumbfounded with horror. He

had never pondered sufficiently on the possible consequences of every act we do. Can we ever tell, when we lift our arm, if we may not strike, as the merchant did, a genie of the air? In your place, I should not feel at ease at all. How do you know that your quiet sojourn in this old Priory, overgrown with ivy and saxifrage, is not an act of more profound importance to humanity than all the discoveries of all the savants, and productive of effects of direst import in days to come?"

"It is not probable."

"It is not impossible. You lead a strange life. You speak strange words that may be collected and published. Quite enough, under given circumstances, to make of you, in spite of, even against your will, the founder of a new Religion. Millions of men might embrace it, whom it would render unhappy and ill-conditioned, and who would in your name massacre thousands upon thousands of their fellow-men."

"A man must needs die then to be innocent and win tranquillity?"

"Mind what you say, again; to die is to accomplish an act of incalculably far-reaching potentialities."

**THE MERRIE TALES OF  
JACQUES TOURNEBROCHE**





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## OLIVIER'S BRAG



## OLIVIER'S BRAG



HE Emperor Charlemagne and his twelve peers, having taken the palmer's staff at Saint-Denis, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They prostrated themselves before the tomb of Our Lord, and sat in the thirteen chairs of the great hall wherein Jesus Christ and his Apostles met together to celebrate the blessed sacrifice of the Mass. Then they fared to Constantinople, being fain to see King Hugo, who was renowned for his magnificence.

The King welcomed them in his Palace, where, beneath a golden dome, birds of ruby, wrought with a wondrous art, sat and sang in bushes of emerald.

He seated the Emperor of France and the twelve Counts about a table loaded with stags, boars, cranes, wild geese, and peacocks, served

in pepper. And he offered his guests, in ox-horns, the wines of Greece and Asia to drink. Charlemagne and his companions quaffed all these wines in honour of the King and his daughter, the Princess Helen. After supper Hugo led them to the chamber where they were to sleep. Now this chamber was circular, and a column, springing in the midst thereof, carried the vaulted roof. Nothing could be finer to look upon. Against the walls, which were hung with gold and purple, twelve beds were ranged, while another greater than the rest stood beside the pillar.

Charlemagne lay in this, and the Counts stretched themselves round about him on the others. The wine they had drunk ran hot in their veins, and their brains were afire. They could not sleep, and fell to making brags instead, and laying of wagers, as is the way of the knights of France, each striving to outdo the other in warranting himself to do some doughty deed for to manifest his prowess. The Emperor opened the game. He said:

“Let them fetch me, a-horseback and fully armed, the best knight King Hugo hath. I

will lift my sword and bring it down upon him in such wise it shall cleave helm and hauberk, saddle and steed, and the blade shall delve a foot deep underground."

Guillaume d'Orange spake up after the Emperor and made the second brag.

"I will take," said he, "a ball of iron sixty men can scarce lift, and hurl it so mightily against the Palace wall that it shall beat down sixty fathoms' length thereof."

Ogier, the Dane, spake next.

"Ye see yon proud pillar which bears up the vault. To-morrow will I tear it down and break it like a straw."

After which Renaud de Montauban cried with an oath:

"'Od's life! Count Ogier, whiles you overset the pillar, I will clap the dome on my shoulders and hale it down to the seashore."

Gérard de Rousillon it was made the fifth brag.

He boasted he would uproot single-handed, in one hour, all the trees in the Royal pleasaunce.

Aïmer took up his parable when Gérard was done.



"I have a magic hat," said he, "made of a sea-calf's skin, which renders me invisible. I will set it on my head, and to-morrow, whenas King Hugo is seated at meat, I will eat up his fish and drink down his wine, I will tweak his nose and buffet his ears. Not knowing whom or what to blame, he will clap all his serving-men in gaol and scourge them sore, — and we shall laugh."

"For me," declared Huon de Bordeaux, whose turn it was, "for me, I am so nimble I will trip up to the King and cut off his beard and eyebrows without his knowing aught about the matter. 'T is a piece of sport I will show you to-morrow. And I shall have no need of a sea-calf hat either!"

Doolin de Mayence made his brag too. He promised to eat up in one hour all the figs and all the oranges and all the lemons in the King's orchards.

Next the Duc Naisme said in this wise:

"By my faith! I will go into the banquet hall, I will catch up flagons and cups of gold and fling them so high they will never light down again save to tumble into the moon."

Bernard de Brabant then lifted his great voice :

"I will do better yet," he roared. "Ye know the river that flows by Constantinople is broad and deep, for it is come nigh its mouth by then, after traversing Egypt, Babylon, and the Earthly Paradise. Well, I will turn it from its bed and make it flood the Great Square of the City."

Gérard de Viane said :

"Put a dozen knights in line of array. And I will tumble all the twelve on their noses, only by the wind of my sword."

It was the Count Roland laid the twelfth wager, in the fashion following :

"I will take my horn, I will go forth of the city and I will blow such a blast all the gates of the town will drop from their hinges."

Olivier alone had said no word yet. He was young and courteous, and the Emperor loved him dearly.

"Olivier, my son," he asked, "will you not make your brag like the rest of us?"

"Right willingly, sire," Olivier replied.

"Do you know the name of Hercules of Greece?"

"Yea, I have heard some discourse of him," said Charlemagne. "He was an idol of the misbelievers, like the false god Mahound."

"Not so, sire," said Olivier. "Hercules of Greece was a knight among the Pagans and King of a Pagan kingdom. He was a gallant champion and stoutly framed in all his limbs. Visiting the Court of a certain Emperor who had fifty daughters, virgins, he wedded them all on one and the same night, and that so well and thoroughly that next morning they all avowed themselves well-contented women and with naught left to learn. He had not slighted ever a one of them. Well, sire, as you will, I will lay my wager to do after the fashion of Hercules of Greece."

"Nay, beware, Olivier, my son," cried the Emperor, "beware what you do; the thing would be a sin. I felt sure this King Hercules was a Saracen!"

"Sire," returned Olivier, "know this — I warrant me to show in the same space of time the selfsame prowess with one virgin that Her-

cules of Greece did with fifty. And the maid shall be none other but the Princess Helen, King Hugo's daughter."

"Good and well," agreed Charlemagne; "that will be to deal honestly and as a good Christian should. But you were in the wrong, my son, to drag the fifty virgins of King Hercules into your business, wherein, the Devil fly away with me else, I can see but one to be concerned."

"Sire," answered Olivier mildly, "there is but one of a truth. But she shall win such satisfaction of me that, an I number the tokens of my love, you will to-morrow see fifty crosses scored on the wall, and that is *my* brag."

The Count Olivier was yet speaking when lo! the column which bare the vault opened. The pillar was hollow and contrived in such sort that a man could lie hid therein at his ease to see and hear everything. Charlemagne and the twelve Counts had never a notion of this; so they were sore surprised to behold the King of Constantinople step forth. He was white with anger and his eyes flashed fire.

He said in a terrible voice :

“So this is how ye show your gratitude for the hospitality I offer you. Ye are ill-mannered guests. For a whole hour have ye been insulting me with your bragging wagers. Well, know this,—you, Sir Emperor, and ye, his knights; if to-morrow ye do not all of you make good your boasts, I will have your heads cut off.”

Having said his say, he stepped back within the pillar, which shut to again closely behind him. For a while the twelve paladins were dumb with wonder and consternation. The Emperor was the first to break the silence.

“Comrades,” he said, “’t is true we have bragged too freely. Mayhap we have spoken things better unsaid. We have drunk overmuch wine, and have shown unwisdom. The chiefest fault is mine; I am your Emperor, and I gave you the bad example. I will devise with you to-morrow of the means whereby we may save us from this perilous pass; meantime, it behoves us to get to sleep. I wish you a good night. God have you in his keeping!”

A moment later the Emperor and the twelve

peers were snoring under their coverlets of silk and cloth of gold.

They awoke on the morrow, their minds still distraught and deeming the thing was but a nightmare. But anon soldiers came to lead them to the Palace, that they might make good their brags before the King's face.

"Come," cried the Emperor, "come; and let us pray God and His Holy Mother. By Our Lady's help shall we easily make good our brags."

He marched in front with a more than human majesty of port. Arriving anon at the King's Palace, Charlemagne, Naisme, Aimer, Huon, Doolin, Guillaume, Ogier, Bernard, Renaud, the two Gérards, and Roland fell on their knees and, joining their hands in prayer, made this supplication to the Holy Virgin:

"Lady, which art in Paradise, look on us now in our extremity; for love of the Realm of the Lilies, which is thine own, protect the Emperor of France and his twelve peers, and give them the puissance to make good their brags."

Thereafter they rose up comforted and fulfilled of bright courage and gallant confidence, for they knew that Our Lady would answer their prayer.

King Hugo, seated on a golden throne, accosted them, saying :

“The hour is come to make good your brags. But an if ye fail so to do, I will have your heads cut off. Begone therefore, straightway, escorted by my men-at-arms, each one of you to the place meet for the doing of the fine things ye have insolently boasted ye will accomplish.”

At this order they separated and went divers ways, each followed by a little troop of armed men. Whiles some returned to the hall where they had passed the night, others betook them to the gardens and orchards. Bernard de Brabant made for the river, Roland hied him to the ramparts, and all marched valiantly. Only Olivier and Charlemagne tarried in the Palace, waiting, the one for the knight that he had sworn to cleave in twain, the other for the maiden he was to wed.

But in very brief while a fearful sound arose,

awful as the last trump that shall proclaim to mankind the end of the world. It reached the Great Hall of the Palace, set the birds of ruby trembling on their emerald perches and shook King Hugo on his throne of gold.

'T was a noise of walls crumbling into ruin and floods roaring, and high above the din blared out an ear-splitting trumpet blast. Meanwhile messengers had come hurrying in from all quarters of the city, and thrown themselves trembling at the King's feet, bearing strange and terrible tidings.

"Sire," said one, "sixty fathoms' length of the city walls is fallen in at one crash."

"Sire," cried another, "the pillar which bare up your vaulted hall is broken down, and the dome thereof we have seen walking like a tortoise toward the sea."

"Sire," faltered a third, "the river, with its ships and its fishes, is pouring through the streets, and will soon be beating against your Palace walls."

King Hugo, white with terror, muttered:

"By my faith! these men are wizards."

"Well, Sir King," Charlemagne addressed



him with a smile on his lips, "the Knight I wait for is long of coming."

The King sent for him, and he came. He was a knight of stately stature and well armed. The good Emperor clave him in twain, as he had said.

Now while these things were a-doing, Olivier thought to himself:

"The intervention of Our Most Blessed Lady is plain to see in these marvels; and I am rejoiced to behold the manifest tokens she vouchsafes of her love for the Realm of France. Not in vain have the Emperor and his companions implored the succour of the Holy Virgin, Mother of God. Alas! *I* shall pay for all the rest, and have my head cut off. For I cannot well ask the Virgin Mary to help me make good *my* brag. 'Tis an enterprise of a sort wherein 't would be indiscreet to crave the interference of Her who is the *Lily of Purity*, the *Tower of Ivory*, the *Guarded Door* and the *Fenced Orchard-Close*. And, lacking aid from on high, I am sore afraid I may not do so much as I have said."

Thus ran Olivier's thoughts, when King Hugo roughly accosted him with the words:

"'T is now your turn, Count, to fulfil your promise."

"Sire," replied Olivier, "I am waiting with great impatience for the Princess your daughter. For you must needs do me the priceless grace of giving me her hand."

"That is but fair," said King Hugo. "I will therefore bid her come to you and a chaplain with her for to celebrate the marriage."

At church, during the ceremony, Olivier reflected:

"The maid is sweet and comely as ever a man could desire, and too fain am I to clip her in my arms to regret the brag I have made."

That evening, after supper, the Princess Helen and the Count Olivier were escorted by twelve ladies and twelve knights to a chamber, wherein the twain were left alone together.

There they passed the night, and on the morrow guards came and led them both before King Hugo. He was on his throne,

surrounded by his knights. Near by stood Charlemagne and the peers.

“Well, Count Olivier,” demanded the King, “is your brag made good?”

Olivier held his peace, and already was King Hugo rejoiced at heart to think his new son-in-law’s head must fall. For of all the brags and boasts, it was Olivier’s had angered him worst.

“Answer,” he stormed. “Do you dare to tell me your brag is accomplished?”

Thereupon the Princess Helen, blushing and smiling, spake with eyes downcast and in a faint voice, yet clear withal, and said, — “Yea!”

Right glad were Charlemagne and the peers to hear the Princess say this word.

“Well, well,” said Hugo, “these Frenchmen have God and the Devil o’ their side. It was fated I should cut off none of these knights’ heads. . . . Come hither, son-in-law,” — and he stretched forth his hand to Olivier, who kissed it.

The Emperor Charlemagne embraced the Princess and said to her :

"Helen, I hold you for my daughter and my son's wife. You will go along with us to France, and you will live at our Court."

Then, as his lips lay on the Princess's cheek, he rounded softly in her ear :

"You spake as a loving-hearted woman should. But tell me this in closest confidence, — Did you speak the truth?"

She answered :

"Sire, Olivier is a gallant man and a courteous. He was so full of pretty ways and dainty devices for to distract my mind, *I* never thought of counting. Nor yet did *he* keep score. Needs therefore must I hold him quit of his promise."

King Hugo made great rejoicings for his daughter's nuptials. Thereafter Charlemagne and his twelve peers returned back to France, taking with them the Princess Helen.



**THE MIRACLE OF THE  
MAGPIE**



# THE MIRACLE OF THE MAGPIE

## I



ENT, of the year 1429, presented a strange marvel of the Calendar, a conjunction that moved the admiration not only of the common crowd of the Faithful, but eke of Clerks, well learned in Arithmetic. For Astronomy, mother of the Calendar, was Christian in those days. In 1429 Good Friday fell on the Feast of the Annunciation, so that one and the same day combined the commemoration of the two several mysteries which did commence and consummate the redemption of mankind, and in wondrous wise superimposed one on top of the other, Jesus conceived in the Virgin's womb and Jesus dying on the Cross. This Friday, whereon the mystery of joy came so to coincide exactly with the mystery of



sorrow, was named the "Grand Friday," and was kept holy with solemn Feasts on Mount Anis, in the Church of the Annunciation. For many years, by gift of the Popes of Rome, the sanctuary of Mount Anis had possessed the privilege of the plenary indulgences of a great jubilee, and the late-deceased Bishop of Le Puy, Élie de Le-strange, had gotten Pope Martin to restore this *pardon*. It was a favour of the sort the Popes scarce ever refused, when asked in due and proper form.

The *pardon* of the Grand Friday drew a great crowd of pilgrims and traders to Le Puy-en-Velay. As early as mid February folk from distant lands set out thither in cold and wind and rain. For the most part they fared on foot, staff in hand. Whenever they could, these pilgrims travelled in companies, to the end they might not be robbed and held to ransom by the armed bands that infested the country parts, and by the barons who exacted toll on the confines of their lands. Inasmuch as the mountain districts were especially dangerous, they tarried in

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the neighbouring towns, Clermont, Issoire, Brioude, Lyons, Issingaux, Alais, till they were gathered in a great host, and then went forth on their road in the snow. During Holy Week a strange multitude thronged the hilly streets of Le Puy,—pedlars from Languedoc and Provence and Catalonia, leading their mules laded with leather goods, oil, wool, webs of cloth, or wines of Spain in goat-skins; lords a-horseback and ladies in wains, artisans and traders pacing on their mules, with wife or daughter perched behind. Then came the poor pilgrim folk, limping along, halting and hobbling, stick in hand and bag on back, panting up the stiff climb. Last were the flocks of oxen and sheep being driven to the slaughter-houses.

Now, leant against the wall of the Bishop's palace, stood Florent Guillaume, looking as long and dry and black as an espalier vine in winter, and devoured pilgrims and cattle with his eyes.

"Look," he called to Marguerite the lace-maker, "look at yonder fine heads of bestial."

And Marguerite, squatted beside her bobbins, called back :

“Yea, fine beasts, and fat withal !”

Both the twain were very bare and scant of the goods of this world, and even then were feeling bitterly the pinch of hunger. And folk said it came of their own fault. At that very moment Pierre Grandmange the tripe-seller was saying as much, where he stood in his tripe-shop, pointing a finger at them. “’T would be sinful,” he was crying, “to give an alms to such good-for-nothing varlets.” The tripe-seller would fain have been very charitable, but he feared to lose his soul by giving to evil-livers, and all the fat citizens of Le Puy had the selfsame scruples.

To say truth, we must needs allow that, in the heyday of her hot youth, Marguerite the lace-maker had not matched St. Lucy in purity, St. Agatha in constancy, and St. Catherine in staidness. As for Florent Guillaume, he had been the best scrivener in the city. For years he had not had his equal for engrossing the Hours of Our Lady of Le Puy. But he had been over fond of merrymakings and

junketings. Now his hand had lost its cunning, and his eye its clearness; he could no more trace the letters on the parchment with the needful steadiness of touch. Even so, he might have won his livelihood by teaching apprentices in his shop at the sign of the Image of Our Lady, under the choir buttresses of *The Annunciation*, for he was a fellow of good counsel and experience. But having had the ill fortune to borrow of Maître Jacquet Coquedouille the sum of six livres ten sous, and having paid him back at divers terms eighty livres two sous, he had found himself at the last to owe yet six livres two sous to the account of his creditor, which account was approved correct by the judges, for Jacquet Coquedouille was a sound arithmetician. This was the reason why the scrivenry of Florent Guillaume, under the choir buttresses of *The Annunciation*, was sold, on Saturday the fifth day of March, being the Feast of St. Theophilus, to the profit of Maître Jacquet Coquedouille. Since that time the poor penman had never a place to call his own. But by the good help of Jean Magne the

bell-ringer and with the protection of Our Lady, whose Hours he had aforetime written, Florent Guillaume found a perch o' nights in the steeple of the Cathedral.

The scrivener and the lace-maker had much ado to live. Marguerite only kept body and soul together by chance and charity, for she had long lost her good looks and she hated the lace-making. They helped each other. Folks said so by way of reproach; they had been better advised to account it to them for righteousness. Florent Guillaume was a learned clerk. Well knowing every word of the history of the beautiful Black Virgin of Le Puy and the ordering of the ceremonies of the great *pardon*, he had conceived the notion he might serve as guide to the pilgrims, deeming he would surely light on someone compassionate enough to pay him a supper in guerdon of his fine stories. But the first folk he had offered his services to had bidden him begone because his ragged coat bespoke neither good guidance nor clerkly wit; so he had come back, downhearted and crestfallen, to the Bishop's wall, where he had his bit of sunshine and

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his kind gossip Marguerite. "They reckon," he said bitterly, "I am not learned enough to number them the relics and recount the miracles of Our Lady. Do they think my wits have escaped away through the holes in my gaberdine?"

"'Tis not the wits," replied Marguerite, "escape by the holes in a body's clothes, but the good natural heat. I am sore a-cold. And it is but too true that, man and woman, they judge us by our dress. The gallants would find me comely enough yet if I was accoutred like my Lady the Comtesse de Clermont."

Meanwhile, all the length of the street in front of them the pilgrims were elbowing and fighting their way to the Sanctuary, where they were to win pardon for their sins.

"They will surely suffocate anon," said Marguerite. "Twenty-two years ago, on the Grand Friday, two hundred persons died stifled under the porch of *The Annunciation*. God have their souls in keeping! Ay, those were the good times, when I was young!"

"'Tis very true indeed, that year you tell of, two hundred pilgrims crushed each other

to death and departed from this world to the other. And next day was never a sign to be seen of aught untoward."

As he so spake, Florent Guillaume noted a pilgrim, a very fat man, who was not hurrying to get him assoiled with the same hot haste as the rest, but kept rolling his wide eyes to right and left with a look of distress and fear. Florent Guillaume stepped up to him and louted low.

"Messire," he accosted him, "one may see at a glance you are a sensible man and an experienced; you do not rush blindly to the *pardon* like a sheep to the slaughter. The rest of the folk go helter-skelter thither, the nose of one under the tail of the other; but you follow a wiser fashion. Grant me the boon to be your guide, and you will not repent your bargain."

The pilgrim, who proved to be a gentleman of Limoges, answered in the patois of his countryside, that he had no use for a scurvy beggarman and could very well find his own way to *The Annunciation* for to receive pardon for his faults. And therewith he set his face

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resolutely to the hill. But Florent Guillaume cast himself at his feet, and tearing at his hair :

“ Stop ! stop ! messire,” he cried ; “ i’ God’s name and by all the Saints, I warn you go no farther ! ’T will be your death, and you are not the man we could see perish without grief and dolour. A few steps more and you are a dead man ! They are suffocating up yonder. Already full six hundred pilgrims have given up the ghost. And this is but a small beginning ! Do you not know, messire, that twenty-two years ago, in the year of grace one thousand four hundred and seven, on the selfsame day and at the selfsame hour, under yonder porch, nine thousand six hundred and thirty-eight persons, without reckoning women and children, trampled each other underfoot and perished miserably ? An you met the same fate, I should never smile again. To see you is to love you, messire ; to know you is to conceive a sudden and overmastering desire to serve you.”

The Limousin gentleman had halted in no small surprise and turned pale to hear such discourse and see the fellow tearing out his hair in fistfuls. In his terror he was for turn-



ing back the way he had come. But Florent Guillaume, on his knees in the mud, held him back by the skirt of his jacket.

“Never go that way, messire! not that way. You might meet Jacquet Coquedouille, and you would be all in an instant turned into stone. Better encounter the basilisk than Jacquet Coquedouille. I will tell you what you must do if, like the wise and prudent man your face proclaims you to be, you would live long and make your peace with God. Harken to me; I am a scholar, a Bachelor. To-day the holy relics will be borne through the streets and crossways of the city. You will find great solace in touching the carven shrines which enclose the cornelian cup wherefrom the child Jesus drank, one of the wine-jars of the Marriage at Cana, the cloth of the Last Supper, and the holy foreskin. If you take my advice, we will go wait for them, under cover, at a cookshop I wot of, before which they will pass without fail.”

Then, in a wheedling voice, without loosing his hold of the pilgrim's jacket, he pointed to the lace-maker and said:

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“Messire, you must give six sous to yonder worthy woman, that she may go buy us wine, for she knows where good liquor is to be gotten.”

The Limousin gentleman, who was a simple soul after all, went where he was led, and Florent Guillaume supped on the leg and wing of a goose, the bones whereof he put in his pocket as a present for Madame Ysabeau, his fellow lodger in the timbers of the steeple, — to wit, Jean Magne the bell-ringer’s magpie.

He found her that night perched on the beam where she was used to roost, beside the hole in the wall which was her storeroom wherein she hoarded walnuts and hazel-nuts, almonds and beech-nuts. She had awoke at the noise of his coming and flapped her wings; so he greeted her very courteously, addressing her in these obliging terms:

“Magpie most pious, lady recluse, bird of the cloister, Margot of the Nunnery, sable-frocked Abbess, Church fowl of the lustrous coat, all hail!”

Then offering her the goose bones nicely folded in a cabbage leaf:

“Lady,” he said, “I bring you here the scraps remaining of a good dinner a gentleman from Limoges gave me. His countrymen are radish eaters; but I have taught this one to prefer an Anis goose to all the radishes in the Limousin.”

Next day and the rest of the week Florent Guillaume, — for he could never light on his fat friend again nor yet any other good pilgrim with a well-lined travelling wallet, — fasted *a solis ortu usque ad occasum*, from rising sun to dewy eve. Marguerite the lace-maker did likewise. This was very meet and right, seeing the time was Holy Week.

## II



OW on Holy Easter Day, Maître Jacquet Coquedouille, a notable citizen of the place, was peeping through a hole in a shutter of his house and watching the countless throng of pilgrims passing down the steep street. They were wending homewards, happy to have won their pardon; and the sight of them greatly magnified his veneration for the Black Virgin. For he deemed a lady so much sought after must needs be a puissant dame. He was old, and his only hope lay in God's mercy. Yet was he but ill-assured of his eternal salvation, for he remembered how many a time he had ruthlessly fleeced the widow and the orphan. Moreover, he had robbed Florent Guillaume of his scrivenry at the sign of Our Lady. He was used to lend at high interest on sound security. Yet could

no man infer he was a usurer, forasmuch as he was a Christian, and it was only the Jews practised usury, — the Jews, and, if you will, the Lombards and the men of Cahors.

Now Jacquet Coquedouille went about the matter quite otherwise than the Jews. He never said, like Jacob, Ephraim, and Manasses. “I am lending you money.” What he did say was, “I am putting money into your business to help your trafficking,” a different thing altogether. For usury and lending upon interest were forbidden by the Church, but trafficking was lawful and permitted.

And yet at the thought how he had brought many Christian folk to poverty and despair, Jacquet Coquedouille felt the pangs of remorse, as he pictured the sword of Divine Justice hanging over his head. So on this holy Easter Day he was fain to secure him against the Last Judgment by winning the protection of Our Lady. He thought to himself she would plead for him at the judgment seat of her divine Son, if only he gave her a handsome fee. So he went to the great chest where he kept his gold, and, after mak-

ing sure the chamber door was shut fast, he opened the chest, which was full of angels, florins, esterlings, nobles, gold crowns, gold ducats, and golden sous, and all the coins ever struck by Christian or Saracen. He extracted with a sigh of regret twelve deniers of fine gold and laid them on the table, which was crowded with balances, files, scissors, gold-scales, and account books. After shutting his chest again and triple-locking it, he numbered the deniers, renumbered them, gazed long at them with looks of affection, and addressed them in words so soft and sweet, so affable and ingratiating, so gentle and courteous, it seemed rather the music of the spheres than human speech.

“Oh, little angels!” sighed the good old man. “Oh, my dear little angels! Oh, my pretty gold sheep, with the fine, precious fleece!”

And taking the pieces between his fingers with as much reverence as it had been the body of Our Lord, he put them in the balance and made sure they were of the full weight, — or very near, albeit a trifle clipped

already by the Lombards and the Jews, through whose hands they had passed. After which he spoke to them yet more graciously than before :

“ Oh, my pretty sheep, my sweet, pretty lambs, there, let me shear you ! ’T will do you no hurt at all.”

Then, seizing his great scissors, he clipped off shreds of gold here and there, as he was used to clip every piece of money before parting with it. And he gathered the clippings carefully in a wooden bowl that was already half full of bits of gold. He was ready to give twelve angels to the Holy Virgin ; but he felt no way bound to depart from his use and wont. This done, he went to the aumry where his pledges lay, and drew out a little blue purse, broidered with silver, which a dame of the petty trading sort had left with him in her distress. He remembered that blue and white are Our Lady’s colours.

That day and the next he did nothing further. But in the night, betwixt Monday and Tuesday, he had cramps, and dreamt the devils were pulling him by the feet. This he

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took for a warning of God and our Blessed Lady, tarried within doors pondering the matter all the day, and then toward evening went to lay his offering at the feet of the Black Virgin.



## III



**T**HAT same day, as night was closing in, Florent Guillaume thought ruefully of returning to his airy bedchamber. He had fasted the livelong day, sore against the grain, holding that a good Christian ought not to fast in the glorious Resurrection week. Before mounting to his bed in the steeple, he went to offer a pious prayer to the Lady of Le Puy. She was still there in the midst of the Church at the spot where she had offered herself on the Grand Friday to the veneration of the Faithful. Small and black, crowned with jewels, in a mantle blazing with gold and precious stones and pearls, she held on her knees the Child Jesus, who was as black as his mother and passed his head through a slit in her cloak. It was the miraculous image which St. Louis had received as a

gift from the Soldan of Egypt and had carried with his own hands to the Church of Anis.

All the pilgrims were gone now, and the Church was dark and empty. The last offerings of the Faithful were spread at the feet of the beautiful Black Virgin, displayed on a table lit with wax tapers. You could see amongst the rest a head, hearts, hands, feet, a woman's breasts of silver, a little boat of gold, eggs, loaves, Aurillac cheeses, and in a bowl full of deniers, sous, and groats, a little blue purse broidered with silver. Over against the table, in a huge chair, dozed the priest who guarded the offerings.

Florent Guillaume dropped on his knees before the holy image, and said over to himself this pious prayer :

“ Lady, an it be true that the holy prophet Jeremias, having beheld thee with the eyes of faith ere ever thou wast conceived, carved with his hands out of cedar-wood in thy likeness the holy image before which I am at this present kneeling ; an it be true that afterward King Ptolemy, instructed of the miracles wrought by this same holy image, took it from

the Jewish priests, bare it to Egypt and set it up, covered with precious stones, in the temple of the idols; an it be true that Nebuchadnezzar, conqueror of the Egyptians, seized it in his turn and had it laid amongst his treasure, where the Saracens found it when they captured Babylon; an it be true that the Soldan loved it in his heart above all things, and was used to adore it at the least once every day; an it be true that the said Soldan had never given it to our saintly King Louis, but that his wife, who was a Saracen dame, yet prized chivalry and knightly prowess, resolved to make it a gift to the best knight and worthiest champion of all Christendom; in a word, an this image be miraculous, as I do firmly credit, have it do a miracle, Lady, in favour of the poor clerk who hath many a time writ thy praises on the vellum of the service books. He hath sanctified his sinful hands by engrossing in a fair writing, with great red capitals at the beginning of each clause, ‘the fifteen joys of Our Lady,’ in the vulgar tongue and in rhyme, for the comforting of the afflicted. ’Tis pious work this. Think of

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it, Lady, and heed not his sins. Give him somewhat to eat. 'T will both do me much profit, and bring thee great honour, for the miracle will appear no mean one to all them that know the world. Thou hast this day gotten gold, eggs, cheeses, and a little blue purse broidered with silver. Lady, I grudge thee none of the gifts that have been made thee. Thou dost well deserve them, yea, and more than they. I do not so much as ask thee to make them give me back what a thief hath robbed me of, a thief by name Jacquet Coquedouille, one of the most honoured citizens of this thy town of Le Puy. No, all I ask of thee is not to let me die of hunger. And if thou grant me this boon, I will indite a full and fair history of thine holy image here present."

So prayed Florent Guillaume. The soft murmur of his petition was answered only by the deep-chested, placid snore of the sleeping priest. The poor scrivener rose from his knees, stepped noiselessly adown the nave, for he was grown so light his footfall could scarce be heard, and, fasting as he was, climbed the

tower stairs that had as many steps as there are days in the year.

Meanwhile Madame Ysabeau, slipping under the cloister gate, entered her Church. The pilgrims had driven her away, for she loved peace and solitude. The bird came forward cautiously, putting one foot slowly in front of the other, then stopped and craned her neck, casting a suspicious look to right and left. Then giving a graceful little jump and shaking out her tail feathers, she hopped up to the Black Madonna. Then she stood stock still a few moments, scrutinising the sleeping watchman and questioning the darkness and silence with eyes and ears alert. At last with a mighty flutter of wings she alighted on the table of offerings.

## IV



EANWHILE Florent Guillaume had settled himself for the night in the steeple. It was bitter cold. The wind came blowing in through the luffer-boards and fluted and organed among the bells to rejoice the heart of the cats and owls. And this was not the only objection to the lodging. Since the earthquake of 1427, which had shaken the whole church, the spire was dropping to pieces stone by stone and threatened to collapse altogether in the first storm. Our Lady suffered this dilapidation because of the people's sins.

Presently Florent Guillaume fell asleep, which is a token of his innocency of heart. What dreams he dreamt is clean forgot, except that he had a vision in his sleep of a lady of consummate beauty who came and kissed

him on the mouth. But when his lips opened to return her salute, he swallowed two or three woodlice that were walking over his face and by their tickling had deluded his sleeping senses into the agreeable fancy. He awoke, and hearing a noise of wings beating above his head, he thought it was a devil, as was very natural for him to opine, seeing how the evil spirits flock in countless swarms to torment mankind, and above all at night time. But the moon just then breaking through the clouds, he recognised Madame Ysabeau and saw she was busy with her beak pushing into a crack in the wall that served her for store-house a blue purse broidered with silver. He let her do as she list; but when she had left her hoard, he clambered onto a beam, took the purse, opened it, and saw it contained twelve good gold deniers, which he clapped in his belt, giving thanks to the incomparable Black Virgin of Le Puy. For he was a clerk and versed in the Scriptures, and he remembered how the Lord fed his prophet Elias by a raven; whence he inferred that the Holy Mother of God had sent by a

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magpie twelve deniers to her poor penman, Florent Guillaume.

On the morrow Florent and Marguerite the lace-maker ate a dish of tripe,—a treat they had craved for many a long year.

So ends the Miracle of the Magpie. May he who tells the tale live, as he would fain live, in good and gentle peace, and all good hap befall such folk as shall read the same.





# BROTHER JOCONDE



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HE Parisians were far from loving the English and found it hard to put up with them. When, after the obsequies of the late King Charles VI, the Duke of Bedford had the sword of the King of France borne before him, the people murmured. But what cannot be cured must be endured. Besides, though the capital hated the English, it loved the Burgundians. What more natural for citizen folk, and especially for money-changers and traders, than to admire Duke Philip, a prince of seemly presence and the richest nobleman in Christendom. As for the "little King of Bourges," a sorry-looking mortal and very poor, strongly suspected, moreover, of foul murder at the Bridge of Montereau, what had he about him to please folk withal? Scorn was the sentiment felt for him,

and horror and loathing for his partisans. For ten years now had these been riding and raiding around the walls, pillaging and holding to ransom. No doubt the English and Burgundians did much the same; when, in the month of August, 1423, Duke Philip came to Paris, his men-at-arms had ravaged all the country about. And they were friends and allies of course; but after all they only came and went. The Armagnacs, on the contrary, were always in the field, stealing whatever they could lay their hands upon, firing farmsteads and churches, killing women and children, deflowering virgins and nuns, hanging men by the thumbs. In 1420 they threw themselves like devils let loose on the village of Champigny and burnt up altogether oats, wheat, lambs, cows, oxen, children, and women. They did the like and worse at Croissy. A very great clerk of the University declared they wrought all wickedness that can be wrought and conceived, and that more Christian folk had been martyred at their hands than ever Maximian or Diocletian did to death.

At the news that these accursed Armagnacs

were at the gates of Compiègne and occupying the neighbouring castles and their lands, the folk of Paris were sore afraid. They believed that the Dauphin's soldiers had sworn, if they entered Paris, to slay whomsoever they found there. They affirmed openly that Messire Charles de Valois had given up to his men's mercy town and townsmen, great and small, of every rank and condition, men and women, and that he proposed to drive the plough over the site of the city. The inhabitants mostly believed the tale; so they set the St. Andrew's cross on their coats, in token that they were of the party of the Burgundians. Their hatred was doubled, and their fears with it, when they learned that Brother Richard and the Maid Jeanne were at the head of King Charles' army. They knew nothing of the Maid save from the rumour of the victories she was reported to have won at Orleans. But they deemed she had vanquished the English by the Devil's aid, by means of spells and enchantments. The Masters of the University all said: "A creature in shape of a woman is with the Armagnacs. What it is, God knows!"

For Brother Richard, they knew him well. He had come to Paris before, and they had hearkened reverently to his sermons. He had even persuaded them to renounce those games of chance for which they had been used to forget meat and drink and the services of the Church. Now, at the tidings that Brother Richard was on foray with the Armagnacs and winning over for them by his well-hung tongue good towns like Troyes in Champagne, they called down on him the curse of God and his Saints. They tore out of their hats the leaden medals inscribed with the holy name of Jesus, which the good Brother had given them, and to show in what detestation they held him, resumed dice, bowls, draughts, and all other games they had renounced at his exhortation.

The city was strongly fortified, for in the days when King Jean was a prisoner of the English, the citizens of Paris, seeing the enemy in the heart of the Kingdom, had feared a siege and had hastened to put the walls in a state of defence. They had surrounded the place with moats and counter-moats. The

moats, on the left bank of the river, were dug at the foot of the walls forming the old circle of fortification. But on the right bank there were faubourgs, both extensive and well built, outside the walls and almost touching them. The new moats enclosed a part of these, and the Dauphin Charles, King Jean's son, afterward had a wall built along the line of them. Nevertheless there was some feeling of insecurity, for the Cathedral Chapter took measures to put the relics and treasure out of reach of the enemy.

Meantime, on Sunday, August 21st, a Cordelier, by name Brother Joconde, entered the town. He had made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and was said, like Brother Vincent Ferrier and Brother Bernardino of Sienna, to have enjoyed by the abounding grace of God many revelations anent the forthcoming end of the world. He gave out that he would preach his first sermon to the Parisians on Tuesday following, St. Bartholomew's day, in the Cloister of "The Innocents." On the eve of that day more than six thousand persons spent the night in the Cloister. At the foot of the platform



wherefrom he was to preach, the women sat squatted on their heels, and amongst them Guillaumette Dyonis, who was blind from birth.

She was the child of an artisan who had been killed by the Burgundians in the woods of Boulogne-la-Grande. Her mother had been carried off by a Burgundian man-at-arms, and none knew what had become of her. Guillaumette was fifteen or sixteen years of age. She lived at "The Innocents" on what she made by spinning wool, at which trade there was not a better worker to be found in all the town. She went and came in the streets without the help of any and knew everything as well as those who can see. As she lived a good and holy life and fasted often, she was favoured with visions. In especial she had been accorded notable revelations by the Apostle St. John concerning the troubles that then beset the Kingdom of France. Now, as she was reciting her Hours at the foot of the platform, under the great Dance of Death, a woman called Simone la Bardine, who was seated on the ground beside her, asked her if the good Brother was not coming soon.

Guillaumette Dyonis could not see the tailed gown of green and the horned wimple which Simone la Bardine wore ; yet she knew by instinct the woman was no honest dame. She felt a natural aversion for light women and the sort the soldiers called their sweethearts or "doxies," but it had been revealed to her that we should hold such in great pity and deal compassionately with them. Wherefore she answered Simone la Bardine gently :

"The good Father will come soon, please God. And we shall have no reason to regret having waited, for he is eloquent in prayer and his sermons turn the folk to devotion more even than those of Brother Richard, who spake in these Cloisters in the springtime. He knows more than any man living of the times that shall come and shall show us strange portents. I trow we shall gain great profit of his words."

"God grant it," sighed Simone la Bardine. "But are you not very sorry to be blind?"

"No. I wait to see God."

Simone la Bardine made her mantle into a cushion, and said :

“Life is all ups and downs. I live at the top of the Rue Saint-Antoine. ’T is the finest part of the city and the merriest, for the best hostelries are in the Place Baudet and thereabout. Before the Wars there was aye abundance there of hot cakes and fresh herrings and Auxerre wine by the tun. With the English famine entered the town. Now is there neither bread in the bin nor firewood on the hearth. One after other the Armagnacs and the Burgundians have drunk up all the wine, and there is naught left in the cellar but a little thin, sour cider and sloe-juice. Knights armed for the tourney, pilgrims with their cockleshells and staves, traders with their chests full of knives and little service-books, where are they gone? They never come now to seek a lodging and good living in the Rue Saint-Antoine. But the wolves quit covert in the forests and prowl of nights in the faubourgs and devour little children.”

“Put your trust in God,” Guillaumette Dyonis answered her.

“Amen!” returned Simone la Bardine. “But I have not told you the worst. On the Thurs-

day before St. John's day, at three after midnight, two Englishmen came knocking at my door. Not knowing but they had come to rob me or break up my chests and coffers out of mischief, or do some other devilment, I shouted to them from my window to go their ways, that I did not know them and I was not going to open the door. But they only hammered louder, swearing they were going to break in the door and come in and cut off my nose and ears. To stop their uproar I emptied a crockful of water on their heads; but the crock slipped out of my hands and broke on the back of one fellow's neck so unchancily that it felled him. His comrade called up the watch. I was haled to the Châtelet and clapped in prison, where I was very hardly handled, and only escaped by paying a heavy sum of money. I found my house pillaged from cellar to attic. From that day my affairs have gone from bad to worse, and I have naught in the wide world but the clothes I stand up in. In very despair I have come hither to hear the good Father, who they say abounds in comforting words."

"God, who loves you," said Guillaumette Dyonis, "has moved you in all this."

Then a great silence fell on the crowd as Brother Joconde appeared. His eyes flashed like lightning. When he opened his lips, his voice pealed out like thunder.

"I have come from Jerusalem," he began; "and to prove it, see in this wallet are roses of Jericho, a branch of the olive under which Our Saviour sweated drops of blood, and a handful of the earth of Calvary."

He gave a long narrative of his pilgrimage. And he added:

"In Syria I met Jews travelling in companies; I asked them whither they were bound, and they told me: 'We are flocking in crowds to Babylon, because in very deed the Messiah is born among men, and will restore us our heritage, and stablish us again in the Land of Promise.' So said these Jews of Syria. Now the Scriptures teach us that he they call the Messiah is, in truth, Antichrist, of whom it is said he must be born at Babylon, chief city of the kingdom of Persia, be reared at Bethsaida, and dwell in his youth at Chorazin. That is

why Our Lord said : ‘Woe unto thee, Chorazin ! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida !’

“The year that is at hand,” went on Brother Joconde, “will bring the greatest marvels that have ever been beheld.

“The times are at hand. He is born, the man of sin, the son of perdition, the wicked man, the beast from out the abyss, the abomination of desolation. He comes from the tribe of Dan, of which it is written: ‘Dan shall be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path.’

“Brethren, soon shall ye see returning to this earth the Prophets Elias and Enoch, Moses, Jeremias, and St. John Evangelist. And lo ! the day of wrath is dawning, the day which ‘solvat sæclum in favilla, teste David et Sibylla.’ Wherefore now is the time to repent and do penance and renounce the false delights of this world.”

At the good Brother’s word bosoms heaved with remorse and deep-drawn sighs were heard. Not a few, both men and women, were near fainting when the preacher cried :

“I read in your souls that ye keep man-

drakes at home, which will bring you to hell fire."

It was true. Many Parisians paid heavily to the old witch-wives, who profess unholy knowledge, for to buy mandrakes, and were used to keep them treasured in a chest. These magic roots have the likeness of a little man, hideously ugly and misshapen in a weird and diabolic fashion. They would dress them out magnificently, in fine linen and silks, and the mannikins brought them riches, chief source of all the ills of this world.

Next Brother Joconde thundered against women's extravagant attire.

"Leave off," he bade them, "your horns and your tails! Are ye not shamed so to bedizen yourselves like she-devils? Light bonfires, I say, in the public streets, and cast therein and burn your damnable head-gear, — pads and rolls, erections of leather and whale-bone, wherewith ye stiffen out the front of your hoods."

He ended by exhorting them with so much zeal and loving-kindness not to lose

their souls, but put themselves in the grace of God, that all who heard him wept hot tears. And Simone la Bardine wept more abundantly than any.

When, finally, coming down from his platform, Brother Joconde crossed the cloister and graveyard, the people fell on their knees as he went by. The women gave him their little ones to bless, or besought him to touch medals and rosaries for them. Some plucked threads from his gown, thinking to get healing by putting them, like relics of the Saints, on the places where they were afflicted. Guillaumette Dyonis followed the good Father as easily as if she saw him with her bodily eyes. Simone la Bardine trailed behind her, sobbing. She had pulled off her horned wimple and tied a kerchief round her head.

Thus they marched, the three of them, along the streets, where men and women, who had been at the preaching, were kindling fires before their doors to cast therein head-gear and mandrake roots. But on reaching the river bank, Brother Joconde sat



down under an elm, and Guillaumette Dyonis came up to him and said:

“Father, it hath been revealed to me in vision that you are come to this Kingdom to restore the same to good peace and concord. I have had myself many revelations concerning the peace of the Kingdom.”

Next Simone la Bardine took up her parable and said:

“Brother Joconde, I lived once in a fine house in the Rue Saint-Antoine, near by the Place Baudet, which is the fairest quarter of Paris, and the wealthiest. I had a matted chamber, mantles of cloth of gold, and gowns trimmed with miniver, enough to fill three great chests; I had a feather-bed, a dresser loaded with pewter, and a little book wherein you saw in pictures the story of Our Lord. But since the wars and pillagings that devastate the Kingdom, I have lost everything. The gallants never come now to take their pleasure in the Place Baudet. But the wolves come there instead to devour little children. The Burgundians and the English are as bad as the Armagnacs. Would you have me go with you?”

The Monk gazed a while in silence at the two women; and deeming it was Jesus Christ himself had led them to him, he received them for his Penitents, and thereafter the twain followed him wherever he went. Every day he preached to the people, now at "The Innocents," now at the Porte Saint-Honoré, or at the Halles. But he never went outside the Walls, by reason of the Armagnacs, who were raiding all the countryside round the city.

His words led many souls to a better life; and at the fourth sermon he preached in Paris, he received for Penitents Jeannette Chastenier, wife of a merchant-draper on the Pont-au-Change, and another woman, by name Oppor-tune Jadoin, who nursed the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu and was no longer very young. He admitted likewise into his company a gardener of the Ville-l'Evêque, a lad of about sixteen, Robin by name, who bare on his feet and hands the stigmata of the crucifixion, and was shaken by a sore trembling of all his limbs. He often saw the Holy Virgin in corporeal presence, and heard her speech and sa-

voured the divine odours of her glorified body. She had entrusted him with a message for the Regent of England and for the Duke of Burgundy. Meantime the army of Messire Charles of Valois entered the town of Saint-Denis. And no man durst from that day go out of Paris to harvest the fields or gather aught from the market-gardens which covered the plain to the northward of the city. Instantly famine prices ruled, and the inhabitants began to suffer cruelly. And they were further exasperated because they believed themselves betrayed. It was openly said that certain folk, and in especial certain men of Religion, suborned by Messire Charles of Valois, were watching for the best time to stir up trouble and bring in the enemy in an hour of panic and confusion. Haunted by this fear, which was not perhaps altogether baseless, the citizens who kept guard of the ramparts showed scant mercy to any men of evil looks whom they found loitering near the Gates and whom they might suspect, on the most trivial evidence, of making signals to the Armagnacs.

On Thursday, September 8th, the good

people of Paris awoke without any fear of being attacked before the next day. This day, September 8th, was the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin, and it was an established custom with the two factions that tore the Kingdom in twain to keep holy the feast-days of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

Yet at this holy season the Parisians, on coming forth from Mass, learnt that, notwithstanding the sacredness of the day, the Armagnacs had appeared before the Porte Saint-Honoré and had set fire to the outwork which defended its approach. It was further reported that Messire Charles of Valois was posted, for the time being, along with Brother Richard and the Maid Jeanne, in the Hog Market without the Walls. The same afternoon, through all the city, on either side the bridges, shouts of fear arose — “Save yourselves! fly, the enemy are come in, all is lost!” The cries were heard even inside the Churches, where pious folks were singing Vespers. These came flying out in terror and ran to their houses to take refuge behind barred doors.

Now the men who went about raising these

cries were emissaries of Messire Charles of Valois. In fact, at that very time, the Company of the Maréchal de Rais was making assault on the Walls near by the Porte Saint-Honoré. The Armagnacs had brought up in carts great bundles of faggots and wattled hurdles to fill up the moats, and above six hundred scaling-ladders for storming the ramparts. The Maid Jeanne, who was nowise as the Burgundians believed, but lived a pious life and guarded her chastity, set foot to ground, and was the first down into a dry moat, which *for that cause was easy to cross. But there-upon they found themselves exposed to the arrows and cross-bolts that rained down thick and fast from the Walls. Then they had in front of them a second moat. Wherefore were the Maid and her men-at-arms sore hampered. Jeanne sounded the great moat with her lance and shouted to throw in faggots.*

Inside the town could be heard the roar of cannon, and all along the streets the citizens were running, half accoutred, to their posts on the ramparts, knocking over as they went

the brats playing about in the gutters. The chains were drawn across the roadways, and barricades were begun. Tribulation and tumult filled all the place.

But neither the Brother Joconde nor his Penitents saw aught of it, forasmuch as they took heed only of eternal things, and deemed the vain agitation of men to be but a foolish game. They marched through the streets singing the "*Veni creator spiritus*," and crying out: "Pray, for the times are at hand."

Thus they made their way in good array down the Rue Saint-Antoine, which was densely crowded with men, women, and children. Coming presently to the Place Baudet, Brother Joconde pushed through the throng and mounted a great stone that stood at the door of the Hôtel de la Truie, which Messire Florimont Lecocq, the master of the house, used to help him mount his mule. This Messire Florimont Lecocq was Sergeant at the Châtelet Prison and a partisan of the English.

So, standing on the great stone, Brother Joconde preached to the people. "Sow ye,"

he cried, "sow ye, good folk; sow abundantly of beans, for He which is to come will come quickly."

By the beans they were to sow, the good Brother signified the charitable works it behoved them accomplish before Our Lord should come, in the clouds of heaven, to judge both the quick and the dead. And it was urgent to sow these works without tarrying, for that the harvest would be soon. Guillaumette Dyonis, Simone la Bardine, Jeanne Chastenier, Opportune Jadoin, and Robin the gardener, stood in a ring about the Preacher, and cried "Amen!"

But the citizens, who thronged behind in a great crowd, pricked up their ears and bent their brows, thinking the Monk was foretelling the entry of Charles of Valois into his good town of Paris, over which he was fain—at any rate, so they believed—to drive the ploughshare.

Meanwhile the good Brother went on with his soul-awakening discourse.

"Oh! ye men of Paris, ye are worse than the Pagans of old Rome."

Just then the mangonels firing from the Porte Saint-Denis mingled their thunder with Brother Joconde's voice and shook the bystanders' hearts within them. Some one in the press cried out, "Death ! death to traitors !"

All this time Messire Florimont Lecocq was within-doors doing on his armour. He now came forth at the noise, before he had buckled his leg-pieces. Seeing the Monk standing on his mounting-block, he asked :

"What is this good Father saying?"

And a chorus of voices answered :

"Telling us that Messire Charles of Valois is going to enter the city," while others cried :

"He is against the folk of Paris," and others again :

"He would fain cozen and betray us, like the Brother Richard, who at this very time is riding with our enemies."

But Brother Joconde made answer :

"There be neither Armagnacs, nor Burgundians, nor French, nor English, but only the sons of light and the sons of darkness. Ye are lewd fellows and your women wantons."



“Go to, thou apostate! thou sorcerer! thou traitor!” yelled Messire Florimont Lecocq, —and lugging out his sword, he plunged it in the good Brother’s bosom.

With pale lips and faltering voice, the man of God still managed to say :

“Pray, fast, do penance, and ye shall be forgiven, my brethren . . .”

Then his voice choked, as the blood poured from his mouth, and he fell on the stones. Two knights, Sir John Stewart and Sir George Morris, threw themselves on the body and pierced it with more than a hundred dagger thrusts, vociferating :

“Long life to King Henry! Long life to my Lord the Duke of Bedford! Down with the Dauphin! Down with the mad Maid of the Armagnacs! Up, up! To the Gates, to the Gates!”

Therewith they ran to the Walls, drawing off with them Messire Florimont and the crowd of citizens.

Meanwhile the holy women and the gardener tarried about the bleeding corse. Simone la Bardine lay prostrate on the ground,

kissing the good Brother's feet and wiping away his blood with her unbound hair.

But Guillaumette Dyonis, standing up with her arms lifted to heaven, cried in a voice as clear as the sound of bells :

“ My sisters, Jeanne, Opportune and Simone, and you, my brother, Robin the gardener, let us be going, for the times are at hand. The soul of this good Father holds me by the hand, and it will lead me aright. Wherefore ye must follow along with me. And we will say to those who are making cruel war upon each other : ‘ Kiss and make peace. And if ye must needs use your arms, take up the cross and go forth all together to fight the Saracens.’ Come ! my sisters and my brother.”

Jeanne Chastenier picked up the shaft of an arrow from the ground, brake it, and made a cross, which she laid on good Brother Joconde's bosom. Then these holy women, and the gardener with them, followed after Guillaumette Dyonis, who led them by the streets and squares and alleys as if her eyes had seen the light of day. They reached 'the foot of the rampart, and by the stairway of a tower

that was left unguarded, they mounted onto the curtain-wall. There had been no time to furnish it with its hoardings of wood ; so they went along in the open. They proceeded toward the Porte Saint-Honoré, by this time enveloped in clouds of dust and smoke. It was there the Maréchal de Rais and his men were making assault. Their bolts flew thick and fast against the ramparts, and they were hurling faggots into the water of the great moat. On the hog's-back parting the great moat from the little, stood the Maid, crying : "*Yield, yield you to the King of France.*" The English had abandoned the top of the wall in terror, leaving their dead and wounded behind them. Guillaumette Dyonis walked first, her head high and her left arm extended before her, while with her right hand she kept signing herself reverently. Simone la Bardine followed close on her heels. Then came Jeanne Chastenier and Opportune Jadoin. Robin the gardener brought up the rear, his body all shaking with his infirmity, and showing the divine stigmata on his hands. They were singing canticles as they walked.

And Guillaumette, turning now toward the city and now toward the open country, cried: "Brethren, embrace ye one another. Live in peace and harmony. Take the iron of your spearheads and forge it into ploughshares!"

Scarce had she spoken ere a shower of arrows, some from the parapet-way where a Company of Citizens was defiling, some from the hog's-back where the Armagnac men-at-arms were massed, flew in her direction, and therewith a storm of insults:

"Wanton! traitress! witch!"

Meanwhile she went on exhorting the two sides to stablish the Kingdom of Jesus Christ upon earth and to live in innocency and brotherly love, till a cross-bow bolt struck her in the throat and she staggered and fell backward.

It was which could laugh the louder at this, Armagnacs or Burgundians. Drawing her gown over her feet, she lay still and made no other stir, but gave up her soul, sighing the name of Jesus. Her eyes, which remained open, glowed like two opals.

Short while after the death of Guillaumette Dyonis the men of Paris returned in great

force to man their Wall, and defended their city right valorously. Jeanne the Maid was wounded by a cross-bow bolt in the leg, and Messire Charles of Valois' men-at-arms fell back upon the Chapelle Saint-Denis. What became of Jeanne Chastenier and Opportune Jadoin no one knows. They were never heard of more. Simone la Bardine and Robin the gardener were taken the same day by the citizens on guard at the Walls and handed over to the Bishop's officer, who duly brought them before the Courts. The Church adjudged Simone heretic, and condemned her for salutary penance to the bread of suffering and the water of affliction. Robin was convicted of sorcery, and, persevering in his error, was burned alive in the Place du Parvis.

FIVE FAIR LADIES  
OF PICARDY, OF POITOU, OF TOU-  
RAINE, OF LYONS, AND OF PARIS



FIVE FAIR LADIES  
OF PICARDY, OF POITOU, OF TOU-  
RAINE, OF LYONS, AND OF PARIS



ONE day the Capuchin, Brother Jean Chavaray, meeting my good master the Abbé Coignard in the cloister of "The Innocents," fell into talk with him of the Brother Olivier Maillard, whose sermons, edifying and macaronic, he had lately been reading.

"There are good bits to be found in these sermons," said the Capuchin, "notably the tale of the five ladies and the go-between . . ." You will readily understand that Brother Olivier, who lived in the reign of Louis XI and whose language smacks of the coarseness of that age, uses a different word. But our century demands a certain politeness and decency in speech; wherefore I employ the term I have, to wit, *go-between*.



"You mean," replied my good master, "to signify by the expression a woman who is so obliging as to play intermediary in matters of love and love-making. The Latin has several names for her, — as *lena*, *conciliatrix*, also *internuntia libidinum*, ambassadress of naughty desires. These prudish dames perform the best of services; but seeing they busy themselves therein for money, we distrust their disinterestedness. Call yours a *procuress*, good Father, and have done with it; 't is a word in common use, and has a not unseemly sound."

"So I will, Monsieur l'Abbé," assented Brother Jean Chavaray. "Only don't say *mine*, I pray, but the Brother Olivier's. A procuress then, who lived on the Pont des Tournelles, was visited one day by a knight, who put a ring into her hands. 'It is of fine gold,' he told her, 'and hath a balass ruby mounted in the bezel. An you know any dames of good estate, go say to the most comely of them that the ring is hers if she is willing to come to see me and do at my pleasure.'

"The procuress knew, by having seen them

at Mass, five ladies of an excellent beauty, — natives the first of Picardy, the second of Poitou, the third of Touraine, another from the good city of Lyons, and the last a Parisian, all dwelling in the Cité or its near neighbourhood.

“She knocked first at the Picard lady’s door. A maid opened, but her mistress refused to have one word to say to her visitor. She was an honest woman.

“The procuress went next to see the lady of Poitiers and solicit her favours for the gallant knight. This dame answered her :

“ ‘Prithee, go tell him who sent you that he is come to the wrong house, and that I am not the woman he takes me for.’

“She too is an honest woman; yet less honest than the first, in that she tried to appear more so.

“The procuress then went to see the lady from Tours, made the same offer to her as to the other, and showed her the ring.

“ ‘I’ faith,’ said the lady, ‘but the ring is right lovely.’

“ ‘’T is yours, an you will have it.’

“‘I will not have it at the price you set on it. My husband might catch me, and I should be doing him a grief he doth not deserve.’

“This lady of Touraine is a harlot, I trow, at bottom of her heart.

“The procuress left her and went straight to the dame of Lyons, who cried :

“‘Alack ! my good friend, my husband is a jealous wight, and he would cut the nose off my face to hinder me winning any more rings at this pretty tilting.’

“This dame of Lyons, I tell you, is a worthless good-for-naught.

“Last of all the procuress hurried to the Parisian’s. She was a hussy, and answered brazenly :

“‘My husband goes Wednesday to his vineyards ; tell the good sir who sent you I will come that day and see him.’

“Such, according to Brother Olivier, from Picardy to Paris, are the degrees from good to evil amongst women. What think you of the matter, Monsieur Coignard ?”

To which my good master made answer :

“’Tis a shrewd matter to consider the acts and impulses of these petty creatures in their relations with Eternal Justice. I have no lights thereanent. But methinks the Lyons dame who feared having her nose cut off was a more good-for-nothing baggage than the Parisian who was afraid of nothing.”

“I am far, very far, from allowing it,” replied Brother Jean Chavaray. “A woman who fears her husband may come to fear hell fire. Her Confessor, it may be, will bring her to do penance and give alms. For, after all, that is the end we must come at. But what can a poor Capuchin hope to get of a woman whom *nothing* terrifies?”



A GOOD LESSON WELL  
LEARNT



## A GOOD LESSON WELL LEARNT



IN the days of King Louis XI there lived at Paris, in a matted chamber, a citizen dame called Violante, who was comely and well-liking in all her person. She had so bright a face that Master Jacques Tribouillard, doctor in law and a renowned cosmographer, who was often a visitor at her house, was used to tell her :

“Seeing you, madame, I deem credible and even hold it proven, what Cucurbitus Piger lays down in one of his scholia on Strabo, to wit, that the famous city and university of Paris was of old known by the name of Lutetia or Leucecia, or some suchlike word coming from *Leuké*, that is to say, ‘the white,’ forasmuch as the ladies of the same had bosoms white as snow,—yet not so clear and bright and white as is your own, madame.”



To which Violante would say in answer :

“ ’T is enough for me if my bosom is not fit to fright folks, like some I wot of. And, if I show it, why, ’t is to follow the fashion. I have not the hardihood to do otherwise than the rest of the world.”

Now Madame Violante had been wedded, in the flower of her youth, to an Advocate of the Parlement, a man of a harsh temper and sorely set on the arraignment and punishing of unfortunate prisoners. For the rest, he was of sickly habit and a weakling, of such a sort he seemed more fit to give pain to folks outside his doors than pleasure to his wife within. The old fellow thought more of his blue bags than of his better half, though these were far otherwise shapen, being bulgy and fat and formless. But the lawyer spent his nights over them.

Madame Violante was too reasonable a woman to love a husband that was so unlovable. Master Jacques Tribouillard upheld she was a good wife, as steadfastly and surely confirmed and stablished in conjugal virtue as Lucretia the Roman. And for proof he alleged that he

had altogether failed to turn her aside from the path of honour. The judicious observed a prudent silence on the point, holding that what is hid will only be made manifest at the last Judgment Day. They noted how the lady was over fond of gewgaws and laces and wore in company and at church gowns of velvet and silk and cloth of gold, purfled with miniver ; but they were too fair-minded folk to decide whether, damning as she did Christian men who saw her so comely and so finely dressed to the torments of vain longing, she was not damning her own soul too with one of them. In a word, they were well ready to stake Madame Violante's virtue on the toss of a coin, cross or pile, — which is greatly to the honour of that fair lady.

The truth is her Confessor, Brother Jean Turelure, was for ever upbraiding her.

“Think you, madame,” he would ask her, “that the blessed St. Catherine won heaven by leading such a life as yours, baring her bosom and sending to Genoa for lace ruffles ?”

But he was a great preacher, very severe on human weaknesses, who could condone naught

and thought he had done everything when he had inspired terror. He threatened her with hell fire for having washed her face with ass's milk.

As a fact, no one could say if she had given her old husband a *meet and proper head-dress*, and Messire Philippe de Coetquis used to warn the honest dame in a merry vein :

“ See to it, I say ! He is bald, he will catch his death of cold ! ”

Messire Philippe de Coetquis was a knight of gallant bearing, as handsome as the knave of hearts in the noble game of cards. He had first encountered Madame Violante one evening at a ball, and after dancing with her far into the night, had carried her home on his crupper, while the Advocate splashed his way through the mud and mire of the kennels by the dancing light of the torches his four tipsy lackeys bore. In the course of these merry doings, a-foot and on horseback, Messire Philippe de Coetquis had formed a shrewd notion that Madame Violante had a limber waist and a full, firm bosom of her own, and there and then had been smit by her charms.

He was a frank and guileless wight and made bold to tell her outright what he would have of her, — to wit, to hold her naked in his two arms.

To which she would make answer :

“Messire Philippe, you know not what you say. I am a virtuous wife,” —

Or another time :

“Messire Philippe, come back again to-morrow, —”

And when he came next day she would ask innocently :

“Nay, where is the hurry ?”

These *never-ending postponements* caused the Chevalier no little distress and chagrin. He was ready to believe, with Master Tribouillard, that Madame Violante was indeed a Lucretia, so true is it that all men are alike in fatuous self-conceit ! And we are bound to say she had not so much as suffered him to kiss her mouth, — only a pretty diversion after all and a bit of wanton playfulness.

Things were in this case when Brother Jean Turelure was called to Venice by the General of his Order, to preach to sundry Turks lately converted to the true Faith.

Before setting forth, the good Brother went to take leave of his fair Penitent, and upbraided her with more than usual sternness for living a dissolute life. He exhorted her urgently to repent and pressed her to wear a hair-shirt next her skin, — an incomparable remedy against naughty cravings and a sovran medicine for natures over prone to the sins of the flesh.

She besought him: “Good Brother, never ask too much of me.”

But he would not hearken, and threatened her with the pains of hell if she did not amend her ways. Then he told her he would gladly execute any commissions she might be pleased to entrust him with. He was in hopes she would beg him to bring her back some consecrated medal, a rosary, or, better still, a little of the soil of the Holy Sepulchre which the Turks carry from Jerusalem together with dried roses, and which the Italian monks sell.

But Madame Violante preferred a quite other request:

“Good Brother, dear Brother, as you are going to Venice, where such cunning work-

men in this sort are to be found, I pray you bring me back a Venetian mirror, the clearest and truest can be gotten."

Brother Jean Turelure promised to content her wish.

While her Confessor was abroad, Madame Violante led the same life as before. And when Messire Philippe pressed her: "Were it not well to take our pleasure together?" she would answer: "Nay! 't is too hot. Look at the weathercock if the wind will not change anon." And the good folk who watched her ways were in despair of her ever giving a proper pair of horns to her crabbed old husband. "'T is a sin and a shame!" they declared.

On his return from Italy Brother Jean Turelure presented himself before Madame Violante and told her he had brought what she desired.

"Look, madame," he said, and drew from under his gown a death's-head.

"Here, madame, is your mirror. This death's-head was given me for that of the prettiest woman in all Venice. She was

what you are, and you will be much like her anon."

Madame Violante, mastering her surprise and horror, answered the good Father in a well-assured voice that she understood the lesson he would teach her and she would not fail to profit thereby.

"I shall aye have present in my mind, good Brother, the mirror you have brought me from Venice, wherein I see my likeness not as I am at present, but as doubtless I soon shall be. I promise you to govern my behaviour by this salutary thought."

Brother Jean Turelure was far from expecting such pious words. He expressed some satisfaction.

"So, madame," he murmured, "you see yourself the need of altering your ways. You promise me henceforth to govern your behaviour by the thought this fleshless skull hath brought home to you. Will you not make the same promise to God as you have to me?"

She asked if indeed she must, and he assured her it behoved her so to do.

"Well, I will give this promise then," she declared.

"Madame, this is very well. There is no going back on your word now."

"I shall not go back on it, never fear."

Having won this binding promise, Brother Jean Turelure left the place, radiant with satisfaction. And as he went from the house, he cried out loud in the street:

"Here is a good work done! By Our Lord God's good help, I have turned and set in the way toward the gate of Paradise a lady, who, albeit not sinning precisely in the way of fornication spoken of by the Prophet, yet was wont to employ for men's temptation the clay whereof the Creator had kneaded her that she might serve and adore him withal. She will forsake these naughty habits to adopt a better life. I have thoroughly changed her. Praise be to God!"

Hardly had the good Brother gone down the stairs when Messire Philippe de Coetquis ran up them and scratched at Madame Violante's door. She welcomed him with a beaming smile, and led him into a closet, furnished



with carpets and cushions galore, wherein he had never been admitted before. From this he augured well. He offered her sweetmeats he had in a box.

“Here be sugar-plums to suck, madame; they are sweet and sugared, but not so sweet as your lips.”

To which the lady retorted he was a vain, silly fop to make boast of a fruit he had never tasted.

He answered her meetly, kissing her forthwith on the mouth.

She manifested scarce any annoyance and said only she was an honest woman and a true wife. He congratulated her and advised her not to lock up this jewel of hers in such close keeping that no man could enjoy it. “For, of a surety,” he swore, “you will be robbed of it, and that right soon.”

“Try then,” said she, cuffing him daintily over the ears with her pretty pink palms.

But he was master by this time to take whatsoever he wished of her. She kept protesting with little cries:

“I won’t have it. Fie! fie on you, mes-

sire! You must not do it. Oh! sweetheart . . . oh! my love . . . my life! You are killing me!”

Anon, when she had done sighing and dying, she said sweetly :

“ Messire Philippe, never flatter yourself you have mastered me by force or guile. You have had of me what you craved, but ’t was of mine own free will, and I only resisted so much as was needful that I might yield me as I liked best. Sweetheart, I am yours. If, for all your handsome face, which I loved from the first, and despite the tenderness of your wooing, I did not before grant you what you have just won with my consent, ’t was because I had no true understanding of things. I had no thought of the flight of time and the shortness of life and love ; plunged in a soft languor of indolence, I reaped no harvest of my youth and beauty. However, the good Brother Jean Turelure hath given me a profitable lesson. He hath taught me the preciousness of the hours. But now he showed me a death’s-head, saying: ‘Suchlike you will be soon.’ This taught me we must be quick to enjoy the

pleasures of love and make the most of the little space of time reserved to us for that end."

These words and the caresses wherewith Madame Violante seconded them persuaded Messire Philippe to turn the time to good account, to set to work afresh to his own honour and profit and the pleasure and glory of his mistress, and to multiply the sure proofs of prowess which it behoves every good and loyal servant to give on suchlike an occasion.

After which, she was ready to cry quits. Taking him by the hand, she guided him back to the door, kissed him daintily on the eyes, and asked :

"Sweetheart Philippe, is it not well done to follow the precepts of the good Brother Jean Turelure?"

## SATAN'S TONGUE—PIE



## SATAN'S TONGUE-PIE



SATAN lay in his bed with the flaming curtains. The physicians and apothecaries of Hell, finding their patient had a white tongue, inferred he was suffering from a weakness of the stomach and prescribed a diet at once light and nourishing.

Satan swore he had no appetite for aught but a certain earthly dish, which women excel in making when they meet in company, to wit, tongue-pie.

The doctors agreed there was nothing could better suit His Majesty's stomach.

In an hour's time the dish was set before the King; but he found it insipid and tasteless.

He sent for his Head Cook and asked him where the pie came from.

"From Paris, sire. It is quite fresh; 't was baked this very morning, in the Marais

Quarter, by a dozen gossips gathered round the bed at a woman's lying-in."

"Ah! now I know the reason it is so flavourless," returned the Prince of Darkness. "You have not been to the best cooks for dishes of the sort. Citizens' wives, they do their best; but they lack delicacy, they lack the fine touch of genius. Women of the people are clumsier still. For a real good tongue-pie a Nunnery is the place to go to. There's nobody to match these old maids of Religion for a pretty skill in compounding all the needful ingredients, — fine spices of rancour, thyme of backbiting, fennel of insinuation, bay-leaf of calumny."

This parable is taken from a sermon of the good Father Gillotin Landoulle, a poor, unworthy Capuchin.

CONCERNING AN  
**HORRIBLE PICTURE**





CONCERNING AN  
HORRIBLE PICTURE

THE WHICH WAS SHOWED IN A TEMPLE AND  
OF SUNDRY LIMNINGS OF A RIGHT PACIFIC  
AND AMOROUS SORT THE WHICH THE SAGE  
PHILEMON HAD HANGED IN HIS LIBRARIE  
AND OF A NOBLE PORTRAITURE OF THE  
POET HOMER THE WHICH THE AFORESAID  
PHILEMON DID PRIZE ABOVE ALL OTHER  
LIMNINGS



PHILEMON was used to confess  
how, in the fire of his callow  
youth and fine flower of his  
lustie springal days, he had been  
stung with murderous frenzie  
at view, of a certaine picture of Apelles, the  
which in those times was showed in a temple.  
And the said picture did present Alexander  
the Great laying on right shrewdly at Darius,  
king of the Indians, whiles round about these  
twain, soldiers and captains were a-slaying one  
another with a savage furie and in divers strange  
fashions. And the said work was right cun-

ningly wrought and in very close mimicrie of nature. And none, an they were in the hot and lustie season of their life, could cast a look thereon without being stirred incontinent to be striking and killing poor harmlesse folk for the sole sake of donning so rich an harness and bestriding such high-stepping chargers as did these good codpieces in their battle, — for that young blood doth aye take pleasure in horse-flesh and the practise of arms. This had the aforesaid Philemon proven in his day. And he was used to say how ever after 't was his wont to turn aside his eyen of set purpose from suchlike pictures of wars and bloodshed, and that he did so heartily loathe these cruelties as that he could not abear to behold them even set forth in counterfeit presentment.

And he was used to say that any honest and prudent wight must needs be sore offended and scandalized by all this appalling array of armour and bucklers and the horde of warriors Homer calls *Corythaioloi* (glancing-helmed) by reason of the terrifying hideousness of their head-gear, and that the portrayal of these same fighting fellows was in very truth unseemly, as

contrarie to good and peaceable manners, immodest, no thing in the world being more shameful then homicide, and eke lascivious, as alluring folk to cruelty, the which is the worst of all allurements. For to entice to pleasant dalliaunce is a far lesse heinous fault.

And the aforesaid Philemon was used to say that it was honest, decent, of good ensample and entirely modest to show by painting, chiselling, or any other fine artifice the scenes of the Golden Age, to wit maidens and young men interlacing limbs in accord with the craving of kindly Nature, or other the like delectable fancy, as of a Nymph lying laughing in the grass. And on her ripe smiling mouth a Faun is crushing a purple grape.

And he was used to say that belike the Golden Age had never flourished save only in the fond imagining of the poets, and that our first forebears of human kind, being yet barbarous and silly folk, had known naught at all thereof; but that, an the said age could not credibly be deemed to have been at the beginning of the world, we might well wish it should be at the end, and that meanwhiles it

was a gracious boon to offer us a likeness of the same in pictured image.

And like as it is (so he would say) obscene, — 't is the word Virgil writes of dogs wallowing in the mud and mire, — to depict murderers, whoreson men-at arms, fighting-men, conquering heroes and plundering thieves, wreaking their foul and wicked will, yea ! and poor devils licking the dust and swallowing the same in great mouthfuls, and one unhappie wretch that hath been felled to the earth and is striving to get to his feet againe, but is pinned down by an horse's hoof pressing on his chops, and another that looketh piteously about him for that his pennon hath been shorn from him and his hand with it, — so is it of right subtile and so to say heavenly art to exhibit prettie blandishments, caresses, frolickings, beauties and delights, and the loves of the Nymphs and Fauns in the woods. And he would have it there was none offence in these naked bodies, clothed upon enow with their owne grace and comeliness.

And he had in his closet, this same Philemon aforesaid, a very marvellous painting, wherein was limned a young Faun in act to filch away

with a craftie hand a light cloth did cover the belly of a sleeping Nymph. 'Twas plain to see he was full fain of his freak and seemed to be saying: The body of this young goddess is so sweet and refreshing as that the fountaine springing in the shade of the woods is not more delightsome. How I do love to look upon you, soft sweet lap, and prettie white thighs, and shady cavern at once terrifying and entrancing! And over the heads of the twain did hover winged Cupids and watched them laughingly, whiles fair dames and their gallants, their brows wreathen with flowers, footed it on the lush grass.

And he had, the aforesaid Philemon, yet other limnings of cunning craftsmanship in his closet. And he did prize very high the portraiture of a good doctor a-sitting in his cabinet writing at a table by candle-light. The said cabinet was fully furnished with globes, gnomons, and astrolabes, proper for meting the movements of the orbs of heaven, the which is a right praiseworthy task and one that doth lift the spirit to sublime thoughts and the exceeding pure love of Venus Urania.

And there was hanging from the joists of the said cabinet a great serpent and crocodile, forasmuch as they be rarities and very needful for the due understanding of anatomy. And he had likewise, the said doctor, amid his belongings, the books of the most excellent philosophers of Antiquity and eke the treatises of Hippocrates. And he was an ensample to young men which should be fain, by hard swinking, to stuff their pates with as much high learning and occult lore as he had under his own bonnet.

And he had, the aforesaid Philemon, painted on a panel that shined like a polished mirror a portraiture of Homer in the guise of an old blind man, his beard white as the flowers of the hawthorn and his temples bound about with the fillets sacred to the god Apollo, which had loved him above all other men. And, to look at that good old man, you deemed verily his lips were presently to ope and break into words of melodie.

MADemoiselle DE DOU-  
CINE'S NEW YEAR'S  
PRESENT





## MADemoisELLE DE DOUCINE'S NEW YEAR'S PRESENT



N January 1st, in the forenoon, the good M. Chanterelle sallied out on foot from his hôtel in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel. He felt the cold and was a poor walker ; so it was a real penance to him to face the chilly air and the bleak streets which were full of half-melted snow. He had refused to take his coach by way of mortifying the flesh, having grown very solicitous since his illness about the salvation of his soul. He lived in retirement, aloof from all society and company, and paid no visits save to his niece, Mademoiselle de Doucine, a little girl of seven.

Leaning on his walking-cane, he made his way painfully to the Rue Saint-Honoré and entered the shop of Madame Pinson at the sign of the *Panier Fleuri*. Here was dis-

played an abundant stock of children's toys to tempt customers seeking presents for this New Year's Day of 1696. You could scarce move for the host of mechanical figures of dancers and tipplers, birds in the bush that clapped their wings and sang, cabinets full of wax puppets, soldiers in white and blue ranged in battle array, and dolls dressed some as fine ladies, others as servant wenches, for the inequality of stations, established by God himself among mankind, appeared even in these innocent mannikins.

M. Chanterelle chose a doll. The one he selected was dressed like the Princess of Savoy on her arrival in France, on November 4th. The head was a mass of bows and ribbons; she wore a very stiff corsage, covered with gold filigrees, and a brocade petticoat with an overskirt caught up by pearl clasps.

M. Chanterelle smiled to think of the delight such a lovely doll would give Mademoiselle de Doucine, and when Madame Pinson handed him the Princess of Savoy wrapped up in silk paper, a gleam of sensuous satisfaction flitted over his kind face, pinched as it was with

illness, pale with fasting and haggard with the fear of hell.

He thanked Madame Pinson courteously, clapped the Princess under his arm and walked away, dragging his leg painfully, towards the house where he knew Mademoiselle de Doucine was waiting for him to attend her morning levée.

At the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, he met M. Spon, whose great nose dived almost into his lace cravat.

"Good morning, Monsieur Spon," he greeted him. "I wish you a happy New Year, and I pray God everything may turn out according to your wishes."

"Oh! my good sir, don't say that," cried M. Spon. "'Tis often for our chastisement that God grants our wishes. *Et tribuit eis petitionem eorum.*"

"'Tis very true," returned M. Chanterelle, "we do not know our own best interests. I am an example myself, as I stand before you. I thought at first that the complaint I have suffered from for the last two years was a curse; but I see now it is a blessing, since

it has removed me from the abominable life I was leading at the play-houses and in society. This complaint, which tortures my limbs and is like to turn my brain, is a signal token of God's goodness toward me. But, sir, will you not do me the favour to accompany me as far as the Rue du Roule, whither I am bound, to carry a New Year's gift to my niece Mademoiselle de Doucine?"

At the words M. Spon threw up his arms and gave a great cry of horror.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Can it be M. Chanterelle I hear say such things,—and not some profligate libertine? Is it possible, sir, that living as you do a religious and retired life, I see you all in a moment plunge into the vices of the day?"

"Alack! I did not think I was plunging into vice," faltered M. Chanterelle, trembling all over. "But I sorely lack a lamp of guidance. Is it so great a sin then to offer a doll to Mademoiselle de Doucine?"

"Yes, a great and terrible sin," replied M. Spon. "And what you are offering this innocent child to-day is meet to be called an

idol, a devilish simulacrum, than a doll. Are you not aware, sir, that the custom of New Year's gifts is a foul superstition and a hideous survival of Paganism?"

"No, I did not know that," said M. Chanterelle.

"Let me tell you, then," resumed M. Spon, "that this custom descends from the Romans, who seeing something divine in all beginnings, held the beginning of the year holy also. Hence, to act as they did is to do idolatry. You make New Year's offerings, sir, in imitation of the worshippers of the God Janus. Be consistent, and like them consecrate to Juno the first day of every month."

M. Chanterelle, hardly able to keep his feet, begged M. Spon to give him his arm, and while they moved on, M. Spon proceeded in the same vein:

"Is it because the Astrologers have fixed on the first of January for the beginning of the year that you deem yourself obliged to make presents on that day? Pray, what call have you to revive at that precise date the affection of your friends. Was their love dying then

with the dying year? And will it be so much worth the having when you have reanimated it by dint of cajolements and baneful gifts?"

"Sir," returned the good M. Chanterelle, leaning on M. Spon's arm and trying hard to make his tottering steps keep pace with his impetuous companion's, "sir, before my sickness, I was only a miserable sinner, taking no heed but to treat my friends with civility and govern my behaviour by the principles of honesty and honour. Providence hath deigned to rescue me from this abyss, and I direct my conduct since my conversion by the admonitions the Director of my conscience gives me. But I have been so light-minded and thoughtless as not to seek his advice on this question of New Year's gifts. What you tell me of them, sir, with the authority of a man alike admirable for sober living and sound doctrine, amazes and confounds me."

"Nay! that is indeed what I mean to do," resumed M. Spon,— "to confound you, and to illumine you, not indeed by my own lights, which burn feebly, but by those of a great Doctor. Sit you down on that wayside post."

And pushing M. Chanterelle into the archway of a carriage gate, where he made himself as easy as circumstances allowed, M. Spondrew from his pocket a little parchment-bound book, which he opened, and after hunting through the pages, lighted on a passage which he proceeded to read out loud amid a gaping circle of chimney-sweeps, chamber-maids, and scullions who had collected at the resounding tones of his voice :

“ ‘ We who hold in abhorrence the festivals of the Jews, and who would deem strange and outlandish their Sabbaths and New Moons and other Holy Days erst loved of the Almighty, we deal familiarly with the Saturnalia and the Calends of January, with the Matronalia and the Feast of the Winter Solstice ; New Year’s gifts and foolish presents fill all our thoughts ; merrymakings and junketings are in every house. The Heathens guard their religion better ; they are heedful to observe none of our Feasts, for fear of being taken for Christians, while we never hesitate to make ourselves look like Heathens by celebrating their Ceremonial Days.’ ”



“You hear what I say,” went on M. Spon. “’Tis Tertullian speaks in this wise and from the depths of Africa displays before your eyes, sir, the odiousness of your behaviour. He it is upbraids you, declaring how ‘New Year’s gifts and foolish presents fill all your thoughts. You keep holy the feasts of the Heathen.’ I have not the honour to know your Confessor. But I shudder, sir, to think of the way he neglects his duty toward you. Tell me this, can you rest assured that at the day of your death, when you come to stand before God, he will be at your side, to take upon him the sins he hath suffered you to fall into?”

After haranguing in this sort, he put back his book in his pocket and marched off with angry strides, followed at a distance by the astonished chimney-sweeps and scullions.

The good M. Chanterelle was left sitting alone on his post with the Princess of Savoy, and thinking how he was risking the eternal pains of hell fire for giving a doll to Mademoiselle de Doucine, his niece, he fell to pondering the unfathomable mysteries of Religion.

His legs, which had been tottery for several

months, refused to carry him, and he felt as unhappy as ever a well-meaning man possibly can in this world.

He had been sitting stranded in this distressful mood on his post for some minutes when a Capuchin friar stepped up and addressed him :

“Sir, will you not give New Year’s presents to the Little Brethren who are poor, for the love of God?”

“Why! what! good Father,” M. Chanterelle burst out, “you are a man of religion, and you ask me for New Year’s gifts?”

“Sir,” replied the Capuchin, “the good St. Francis bade his sons make merry with all simplicity. Give the Capuchins wherewith to make a good meal this day, that they may endure with cheerfulness the abstinence and fasting they must observe all the rest of the year,—barring, of course, Sundays and Feast Days.”

M. Chanterelle gazed at the holy man with wonder :

“Are you not afraid, Father, that this custom of New Year’s gifts is baneful to the soul?”

"No, I am not afraid."

"The custom comes to us from the Pagans."

"The Pagans sometimes followed good customs. God was pleased to suffer some faint rays of his light to pierce the darkness of the Gentiles. Sir, if you refuse to give *us* presents, never refuse a boon to our poor little ones. We have a home for foundlings. With this poor crown I shall buy each child a little paper windmill and a cake. They will owe you the only pleasure perhaps of all their life; for they are not fated to have much joy in the world. Their laughter will go up to heaven; when children laugh, they praise the Lord."

M. Chanterelle laid his well-filled purse in the poor friar's palm and got him down from his post, saying over softly to himself the word he had just heard:

"When children laugh, they praise the Lord."

Then his soul was comforted and he marched off with a firmer step to carry the Princess of Savoy to Mademoiselle de Doucine, his niece.

**MADemoiselle ROXANE**



## MADemoiselle ROXANE



Y good master, M. l'Abbé Coignard, had taken me with him to sup with one of his old fellow-students, who lodged in a garret in the Rue Git-le-Cœur.

Our host, a Premonstratensian Father of much learning and a fine Theologian, had fallen out with the Prior of his House for having writ a little book relating the calamities of Mam'zelle Fanchon. The end of it was he turned tavern-keeper at The Hague. He was now returned to France and living precariously by the sermons he composed, which were full of high argument and eloquence. After supper he had read us these same calamities of Mam'zelle Fanchon, source of his own, and the reading had kept us there till a late hour. At last I found myself without-doors with my good master, under a wondrous fine

summer's night, which made me straightway comprehend the verity of the ancient fables regarding the loves of Diana and feel how natural it is to employ in soft dalliance the silent, silvery hours of night. I said as much to M. l'Abbé Coignard, who retorted that love is to blame for many and great ills.

"Tournebroche, my son," he asked me, "have you not just heard from the mouth of yonder good Monk how, for having loved a recruiting sergeant, a clerk of M. Gaulot's mercer at the sign of the *Truie-qui-file*, and the younger son of M. le Lieutenant-Criminel Leblanc, Mam'zelle Fanchon was clapped in hospital? Would you wish to be any of these, — sergeant or clerk or limb of the law?"

I answered I would indeed. My good master thanked me for my candid avowal, and quoted some verses of Lucretius to persuade me that love is contrary to the tranquillity of a truly philosophical soul.

Thus discoursing, we were come to the round-point of the Pont-Neuf. Leaning our elbows on the parapet, we looked over at the

great tower of the Châtelet, which stood out black in the moonlight.

“There might be much to say,” sighed my good master, “on this justice of the civilized nations, the punishments whereof in retaliation are often more cruel than the crime itself. I cannot believe that these tortures and penalties that men inflict on their fellows are necessary for the safeguarding of States, seeing how from time to time one and another legal cruelty is done away with without hurt to the commonweal. And I hold it likely that the severities they still maintain are no whit more useful than those they have abolished. But men are cruel. Come away, Tournebroche, my dear lad; it grieves me to think how unhappy prisoners are even now lying awake behind those walls in anguish and despair. I know they have done faultily, but this doth not hinder me from pitying them. Which of us is without offence?”

We went on our way. The bridge was deserted save for a beggarman and woman, who met on the causeway. The pair drew stealthily into one of the recesses over the



piers, where they lurked together on the door-step of a huckster's booth. They seemed well enough content, both of them, to mingle their joint wretchedness, and when we went by were thinking of quite other things than craving our charity. Nevertheless my good master, who was the most compassionate of men, threw them a half farthing, the last piece of money left in his breeches pocket.

"They will pick up our obol," he said, "when they have come back to the consciousness of their misery. I pray they may not quarrel then over fiercely for possession of the coin."

We passed on without further rencounter till on the Quai des Oiseleurs we espied a young damsel striding along with a notable air of resolution. Hastening our pace to get a nearer view, we saw she had a slim waist and fair hair in which the moonbeams played prettily. She was dressed like a citizen's wife or daughter.

"There goes a pretty girl," said the Abbé; "how comes it she is out of doors alone at this hour of night?"

"Truly," I agreed, "'t is not the sort one generally encounters on the bridges after curfew."

Our surprise was changed to alarm when we saw her go down to the river bank by a little stairway the sailors use. We ran towards her; but she did not seem to hear us. She halted at the edge; the stream was running high, and the dull roar of the swollen waters could be heard some way off. She stood a moment motionless, her head thrown back and arms hanging, in an attitude of despair. Then, bending her graceful neck, she put her two hands over her face and kept it hid behind her fingers for some seconds. Next moment she suddenly grasped her skirts and dragged them forward with the gesture a woman always uses when she is going to jump. My good master and I came up with her just as she was taking the fatal leap, and we hauled her forcibly backward. She struggled to get free of our arms; and as the bank was all slimy and slippery with ooze deposited by the receding waters (for the river was already beginning to fall), M.

l'Abbé Coignard came very near being dragged in too. I was losing my foothold myself. But as luck would have it, my feet lighted on a root which held me up as I crouched there with my arms round the best of masters and this despairing young thing. Presently, coming to the end of her strength and courage, she fell back on M. l'Abbé Coignard's breast, and we managed all three to scramble to the top of the bank again. He helped her up daintily, with a certain easy grace that was always his. Then he led the way to a great beech-tree at the foot of which was a wooden bench, on which he seated her.

Taking his place beside her :

"Mademoiselle," he said gently, "you need have no fear. Say nothing just yet, but be assured it is a friend sits by you."

Next, turning to me, my master went on :

"Tournebroche, my son, we may congratulate ourselves on having brought this strange adventure to a good end. But I have left my hat down yonder on the river bank ; albeit it has lost pretty near all its lace and is thread-

bare with long service, it was still good to guard my old head, sorely tried by years and labours, against sun and rain. Go see, my son, if it may still be found where I dropped it. And if you discover it, bring it me, I beg, — likewise one of my shoe buckles, which I see I have lost. For my part I will stay by this damsel we have rescued and watch over her slumber.”

I ran back to the spot we had just quitted and was lucky enough to find my good master’s hat. The buckle I could not espy anywhere. True, I did not take any very excessive pains to hunt for it, having never all my life seen my good master with more than one shoe buckle. When I returned to the tree, I found the damsel still in the same state, sitting quite motionless with her head leant against the trunk of the beech. I noticed now that she was of a very perfect beauty. She wore a silk mantle trimmed with lace, very neat and proper, and on her feet light shoes, the buckles of which caught the moonbeams.

I could not have enough of examining her. Suddenly she opened her drooping lids, and

casting a look that was still misty at M. Coignard and me, she began in a feeble voice, but with the tone and accent, I thought, of a person of gentility :

“ I am not ungrateful, sirs, for the service you have done me from feelings of humanity ; but I cannot truthfully tell you I am glad, for the life to which you have restored me is a curse, a hateful, cruel torment.”

At these sad words my good master, whose face wore a look of compassion, smiled softly, for he could not really think life was to be for ever hateful to so young and pretty a creature.

“ My child,” he told her, “ things strike us in a totally different light according as they are near at hand or far off. It is no time for you to despair. Such as I am, and brought to this sorry plight by the buffets of time and fortune, I yet make shift to endure a life wherein my pleasures are to translate Greek and dine sometimes with sundry very worthy friends. Look at me, mademoiselle, and say, — would you consent to live in the same conditions as I ? ”

She looked him over ; her eyes almost

laughed, and she shook her head. Then, resuming her melancholy and mournfulness, she faltered :

“ There is not in all the world so unhappy a being as I am.”

“ Mademoiselle,” returned my good master, “ I am discreet both by calling and temperament ; I will not seek to force your confidence. But your looks betray you : any one can see you are sick of disappointed love. Well, ’t is not an incurable complaint. I have had it myself, and I have lived many a long year since then.”

He took her hand, gave her a thousand tokens of his sympathy, and went on in these terms :

“ There is only one thing I regret for the moment, — that I cannot offer you a refuge for the night, or what is left of it. My present lodging is in an old château a long way from here, where I am busy translating a Greek book along with young Master Tournebroke whom you see here.”

My master spoke the truth. We were living at the time with M. d’Astarac, at the

Château des Sablons, in the village of Neuilly, and were in the pay of a great alchemist, who died later under tragic circumstances.

"At the same time, mademoiselle," my master added, "if you should know of any place where you think you could go, I shall be happy to escort you thither."

To which the girl answered she appreciated all his kindness, that she lived with a kinswoman, to whose house she could count on being admitted at any hour; but that she had rather not return before daylight. She was fain, she said, not to disturb quiet folks' sleep, and dreaded moreover to have her grief too painfully renewed by the sight of her old, familiar surroundings.

As she spoke thus, the tears rained down from her eyes. My good master bade her:

"Mademoiselle, give me your handkerchief, if you please, and I will wipe your eyes. Then I will take you to wait for daybreak under the archways of the Halles, where we can sit in comfort under shelter from the night dews."

The girl smiled through her tears.

"I do not like," she said, "to give you so much trouble. Go your way, sir, and rest assured you take my best thanks with you."

For all that she laid her hand on the arm my good master offered her, and we set out, all the three of us, for the Halles. The night had turned much cooler. In the sky, which was beginning to assume a milky hue, the stars were growing paler and fainter. We could hear the first of the market-gardeners' carts rumbling along to the Halles, drawn by a slow-stepping horse, half asleep in the shafts. Arrived at the archways, we chose a place in the recess of a porch distinguished by an image of St. Nicholas, and established ourselves all three on a stone step, on which M. l'Abbé Coignard took the precaution of spreading his cloak before he let his young charge sit down.

Thereupon my good master fell to discoursing on divers subjects, choosing merry and enlivening themes of set purpose to drive away the gloomy thoughts that might assail our companion's mind. He told her he accounted this rencounter the most fortunate he had ever chanced on all his life, and that he should ever



cherish a fond recollection of one who had so deeply touched him, — all this, however, without ever asking to know her name and story.

My good master thought no doubt that the unknown would presently tell him what he refrained from asking. She broke into a fresh flood of weeping, heaved a deep sigh and said:

“I should be churlish, sir, to reward your kindness with silence. I am not afraid to trust myself in your hands. My name is Sophie T——. You have guessed the truth; 't is the betrayal of a lover I was too fondly attached to has brought me to despair. If you deem my grief excessive, that is because you do not know how great was my assurance, how blind my infatuation, and you cannot realize how enchanting was the paradise I have lost.”

Then, raising her lovely eyes to our faces, she went on:

“Sirs, I am not such a woman as your meeting me thus at night time might lead you to suppose. My father was a merchant. He went, in the way of trade, to America, and was lost on his way home in a shipwreck, he

and his merchandise with him. My mother was so overwhelmed by these calamities that she fell into a decline and died, leaving me, while still a child, to the charge of an aunt, who brought me up. I was a good girl till the hour I met the man whose love was to afford me indescribable delights, ending in the despair wherein you now see me plunged."

So saying, Sophie hid her face in her handkerchief. Presently she resumed with a sigh:

"His worldly rank was so far above my own I could never expect to be his except in secret. I flattered myself he would be faithful to me. He swore he loved me, and easily overcame my scruples. My aunt was aware of our feelings for one another, and raised no obstacles, for two reasons, — because her affection for me made her indulgent, and because my dear lover's high position impressed her imagination. I lived a year of perfect happiness only equalled by the wretchedness I now endure. This morning he came to see me at my aunt's, with whom I live. I was haunted by dark forebodings. As I dressed my hair but an hour or so before, I had broken a mirror he

had given me. The sight of him only increased my misgivings, for I noticed instantly that his face wore an unaccustomed look of constraint . . . Oh! sir, was ever woman so unhappy as I? . . .”

Her eyes filled again with tears; but she kept them back under her lids, and was able to finish her tale, which my good master deemed as touching, but by no means so unique, as she did herself.

“He informed me coldly, though not without signs of embarrassment, that his father having bought him a Company, he was leaving to join the colours. First, however, he said, his family required him to plight his troth to the daughter of an Intendant of Finances; the connection was advantageous to his fortune and would bring him means adequate to support his rank and make a figure in the world. And the traitor, never deigning to notice my pale looks, added in his soft, caressing voice which had made me so many vows of affection, that his new obligations would prevent his seeing me again, at least for some while. He assured me further that he

was still my friend and begged me to accept a sum of money in memory of the days we had passed together.

“And with the words he held out a purse to me.

“I am telling you the truth, sirs, when I assure you I had always refused to listen to the offers he repeated again and again, to give me fine clothes, furniture, plate, an establishment, and to take me away from my aunt’s, where I lived in very narrow circumstances, and settle me in a most elegant little mansion he had in the Rue du Roule. My wish was that we should be united only by the ties of affection, and I was proud to have of his gift nothing but a few jewels whose sole value came from the fact of his being the donor. My gorge rose at the sight of the purse he offered me, and the insult gave me strength to banish from my presence the impostor whom in one moment I had learnt to know and to despise. He faced my angry looks unabashed, and assured me with the utmost unconcern that I could know nothing of the paramount obligations that fill the existence of a man of quality,

adding that he hoped eventually, when I looked at things quietly, I should come to see his behaviour in a better light. Then, returning the purse to his pocket, he declared he would readily find a way of putting the contents at my disposal in such a manner as to make it impossible for me to refuse his liberality. Thus leaving me with the odious, the intolerable implication that he was going to make full amends by these sordid means, he made for the door to which I pointed without a word. When he was gone, I felt a calmness of mind that surprised myself. It arose from the resolution I had formed to die. I dressed with some care, wrote a letter to my aunt asking her forgiveness for the pain I was about to cause her by my death, and went out into the streets. There I roamed about all the afternoon and evening and a part of the night, moving from busy thoroughfare to deserted lane without a trace of fatigue, postponing the execution of my purpose to make it more sure and certain under the favouring conditions of darkness and solitude. Possibly too I found a certain

weak pleasure in dallying with the thought of dying and tasting the mournful satisfaction of my coming release from my troubles. At two o'clock in the morning, I went down to the river's brink. Sirs, you know the rest, — you snatched me from a watery grave. I thank you for your goodness, — though I am sorry you saved my life. The world is full of forsaken women. I did not wish to add another to the number."

Sophie then fell silent and began weeping afresh. My good master took her hand with the greatest delicacy.

"My child," he said, "I have listened with a tender interest to the story of your life, and I own 't is a sad tale. But I am happy to discern that your case is curable. Not only was your lover unworthy of the favours you showed him and has proved himself on trial a selfish, cruel-hearted libertine, but I see plainly your love for him was only an impulse of the senses and the effect of your own sensibility, the particular object of which mattered far less than you imagine. What there was rare and excellent in the liaison came from you. Well then,

nothing is lost, since the source still remains. Your eyes, which have thrown a glamour of the fairest hues over, I doubt not, a very ordinary individual, will not cease to go on shedding abroad elsewhere the same bright rays of charming self-delusion."

My good master said more in the same strain, dropping from his lips the finest words ever heard anent the tribulations of the senses and the errors lovers are prone to. But, as he talked on, Sophie, who for some while had let her pretty head droop on the shoulder of this best of men, fell softly asleep. When M. l'Abbé Coignard saw his young friend was wrapped in a sound slumber, he congratulated himself on having discoursed in a vein so meet to afford repose and peace to a suffering soul.

"It must be allowed," he chuckled, "my sermons have a beneficent effect."

Not to disturb Mademoiselle's slumbers, he took a thousand pretty precautions, amongst others constraining himself to talk on uninterruptedly, not unreasonably apprehensive that a sudden silence might awake her.

"Tournebroche, my son," he said, turning

to me, "look, all her sorrows are vanished away with the consciousness she had of them. You must see they were all of the imagination and resided in her own thought. You must understand likewise they sprang from a certain pride and overweening conceit that goes along with love and makes it very exacting. For, in truth, if only we loved in humbleness of spirit and forgetfulness of self, or merely with a simple heart, we should be content with what is vouchsafed us and should not straightway cry treason when some slight is put on us. And if some power of loving were left us still, after our lover had deserted us, we should await the issue in calmness of mind to make what use of it God should please to grant."

But the day was just breaking by this time, and the song of the birds grew so loud it drowned my good master's voice. He made no complaint on this score.

"Hearken," he said, "to the sparrows. They make love more wisely than men do."

Sophie awoke in the white light of dawn, and I admired her lovely eyes, which fatigue and grief had ringed with a delicate pearly



grey. She seemed somewhat reconciled to life, and did not refuse a cup of chocolate which my good master made her drink at Mathurine's door, the pretty chocolate-seller of the Halles.

But as the poor child came into more complete possession of her wits, she began to trouble about sundry practical difficulties she had not thought of till then.

"What will my aunt say? And whatever can I tell her?" she asked distractedly.

The aunt lived just opposite Saint-Eustache, less than a hundred yards from Mathurine's archway. Thither we escorted her niece; and M. l'Abbé Coignard, who had quite a venerable look, though one shoe *was* unbuckled, accompanied the fair Sophie to the door of her aunt's lodging and pitched that lady a fine tale:

"I had the happy fortune," he informed her, "to encounter your good niece at the very moment when she was assailed by four footpads armed with pistols, and I shouted for the watch so lustily that the thieves took to their heels in a panic. But they were not

quick enough to escape the sergeants who, by the rarest chance, ran up in answer to my outcries. They arrested the villains after a desperate tussle. I took my share of the rough and tumble, and I thought at first I had lost my hat in the fray. When all was over, we were all taken, your niece, the four foot-pads and myself, before his Honour the Lieutenant-Criminel, who treated us with much consideration and detained us till daylight in his cabinet, taking down our evidence."

The aunt answered drily :

"I thank you, sir, for having saved my niece from a peril which, to say the truth, is not the risk a girl of her age need fear the most, when she is out alone at night in the streets of Paris."

My good master made no answer to this ; but Mademoiselle Sophie spoke up and said in a voice of deep feeling :

"I do assure you, Aunt, Monsieur l'Abbé saved my life."

. . . . .

Some years after this singular adventure, my master made the fatal journey to Lyons

from which he never returned. He was foully murdered, and I had the ineffable grief of seeing him expire in my arms. The incidents of his death have no connexion with the matter I speak of here. I have taken pains to record them elsewhere; they are indeed memorable, and will never, I think, be forgotten. I may add that this journey was in all ways unfortunate, for after losing the best of masters on the road, I was likewise forsaken by a mistress who loved me, but did not love me alone, and whose loss nearly broke my heart, coming after that of my good master. It is a mistake to suppose that a man who has received one cruel blow grows callous to succeeding strokes of calamity. Far otherwise; he suffers agonies from the smallest contrarieties. I returned to Paris in a state of dejection almost beyond belief.

Well, one evening, by way of enlivening my spirits, I went to the Comédie, where they were playing *Bajazet*, one of Racine's excellent pieces. I was particularly struck by the charm and beauty, no less than the originality and talent, of the actress who took the part

of Roxane. She expressed with a delightful naturalness the passion animating that character, and I shuddered as I heard her declaim in accents that were harmonious and yet terrible the line:

*Écoutez, Bajazet, je sens que je vous aime.\**

I never wearied of gazing at her all the time she occupied the stage, and admiring the beauty of her eyes that gleamed below a brow as pure as marble and crowned by powdered locks all spangled with pearls. Her slender waist too, which her hoop showed off to perfection, did not fail to make a vivid impression on my heart. I had the better leisure to scrutinize these adorable charms as she happened to face in my direction to deliver several important portions of her rôle. And the more I looked, the more I felt convinced I had seen her before, though I found it impossible to recall anything connected with our previous meeting. My neighbour in the theatre, who was a constant frequenter of the Comédie, told me the beautiful actress was

\* "Hearken, Bajazet, I feel I love you."

Mademoiselle B——, the idol of the pit. He added that she was as great a favourite in society as on the boards, that M. le Duc de La —— had made her the fashion and that she was on the highroad to eclipse Mademoiselle Lecouvreur.

I was just leaving my seat after the performance when a “femme de chambre” handed me a note in which I found written in pencil the words:

*“Mademoiselle Roxane is waiting for you in her coach at the theatre door.”*

I could not believe the missive was intended for me; and I asked the abigail who had delivered it if she was not mistaken in the recipient.

“If I *am* mistaken,” she replied confidently, “then you cannot be Monsieur de Tournebroche, that is all.”

I ran to the coach which stood waiting in front of the House, and inside I recognized Mademoiselle B——, her head muffled in a black satin hood.

She beckoned to me to get in, and when I was seated beside her:

“Do you not,” she asked me, “recognize Sophie, whom you rescued from drowning on the banks of the Seine?”

“What! you! Sophie — Roxane — Mademoiselle B——, is it possible?—”

My confusion was extreme, but she appeared to view it without annoyance.

“I saw you,” she went on, “in one corner of the pit. I knew you instantly and played for you. Say, did I play well? I am so glad to see you again!—”

She asked me news of M. l’Abbé Coignard, and when I told her my good master had just perished miserably, she burst into tears.

She was good enough to inform me of the chief events of her life:

“My aunt,” she said, “used to mend her laces for Madame de Saint-Remi, who, as you must know, is an admirable actress. A short while after the night when you did me such yeoman service, I went to her house to take home some pieces of lace. The lady told me I had a face that interested her. She then asked me to read some verses, and concluded I was not without wits. She had me trained.

I made my first appearance at the Comédie last year. I interpret passions I have felt myself, and the public credits me with some talent. M. le Duc de La —— exhibits a very dear friendship for me, and I think he will never cause me pain and disappointment, because I have learnt to ask of men only what they can give. At this moment he is expecting me at supper. I must not break my word."

But, reading my vexation in my eyes, she added:

"However, I have told my people to go the longest way round and to drive slowly."

**CHILD LIFE IN TOWN AND  
COUNTRY**





## FANCHON

### I



FANCHON went early one morning, like Little Red Riding-Hood, to see her grandmother, who lives right at the other end of the village. But Fanchon did not stop like little Red Riding-Hood, to gather nuts in the wood. She went straight on her way and she did not meet the wolf.

From a long way off she saw her grandmother sitting on the stone step at her cottage door, a smile on her toothless mouth and her arms, as dry and knotty as an old vine-stock, open to welcome her little granddaughter. It rejoices Fanchon's heart to spend a whole day with her grandmother; and her grandmother, whose trials and troubles are all over and who lives as happy as a cricket in the warm chimney-corner, is rejoiced too to see

her son's little girl, the picture of her own childhood.

They have many things to tell each other, for one of them is coming back from the journey of life which the other is setting out on.

"You grow a bigger girl every day," says the old grandmother to Fanchon, "and every day I get smaller; I scarcely need now to stoop at all to touch your forehead. What matters my great age when I can see the roses of my girlhood blooming again in your cheeks, my pretty Fanchon?"

But Fanchon asked to be told again—for the hundredth time—all about the glittering paper flowers under the glass shade, the coloured pictures where our Generals in brilliant uniforms are overthrowing their enemies, the gilt cups, some of which have lost their handles, while others have kept theirs, and grandfather's gun that hangs above the chimney-piece from the nail where he put it up himself for the last time, thirty years ago.

But time flies, and the hour is come to get ready the midday dinner. Fanchon's grandmother stirs up the drowsy fire; then

she breaks the eggs on the black earthenware platter. Fanchon is deeply interested in the bacon omelette as she watches it browning and sputtering over the fire. There is no one in the world like her grandmother for making omelettes and telling pretty stories. Fanchon sits on the settle, her chin on a level with the table, to eat the steaming omelette and drink the sparkling cider. But her grandmother eats her dinner, from force of habit, standing at the fireside. She holds her knife in her right hand, and in the other a crust of bread with her toothsome morsel on it. When both have done eating:

“Grandmother,” says Fanchon, “tell me the ‘Blue Bird.’”

And her grandmother tells Fanchon how, by the spite of a bad fairy, a beautiful Prince was changed into a sky-blue bird, and of the grief the Princess felt when she heard of the transformation and saw her love fly all bleeding to the window of the Tower where she was shut up.

Fanchon thinks and thinks.

“Grandmother,” she says at last, “is it a

great while ago the Blue Bird flew to the Tower where the Princess was shut up?"

Her grandmother tells her it was many a long day since, in the times when the animals used to talk.

"You were young then?" asks Fanchon.

"I was not yet born," the old woman tells her.

And Fanchon says:

"So, grandmother, there were things in the world even before you were born?"

And when their talk is done, her grandmother gives Fanchon an apple with a hunch of bread and bids her:

"Run away, little one; go and play and eat your apple in the garden."

And Fanchon goes into the garden, where there are trees and grass and flowers and birds.

## II



ER grandmother's garden was full of grass and flowers and trees, and Fanchon thought it was the prettiest garden in all the world. By this time she had pulled out her pocket-knife to cut her bread with, as they do in the village. First she munched her apple, then she began upon her bread. Presently a little bird came fluttering past her. Then a second came, and a third. Soon ten, twenty, thirty were crowding round Fanchon. There were grey birds, and red, there were yellow birds, and green, and blue. And all were pretty and they all sang. At first Fanchon could not think what they wanted. But she soon saw they were asking for bread and that they were little beggars. Yes, they were beggars, but they were singers as well. Fanchon was too kind-hearted to refuse bread to any one who paid for it with songs.

She was a little country girl, and she did not know that once long ago, in a country where white cliffs of marble are washed by the blue sea, a blind old man earned his daily bread by singing the shepherds' songs which the learned still admire to-day. But her heart laughed to hear the little birds, and she tossed them crumbs that never reached the ground, for the birds always caught them in the air.

Fanchon saw that the birds were not all the same in character. Some would stand in a ring round her feet waiting for the crumbs to fall into their beaks. These were philosophers. Others again she could see circling nimbly on the wing all about her. She even noticed one little thief that darted in and pecked shamelessly at her own slice.

She broke the bread and threw crumbs to them all; but all could not get some to eat. Fanchon found that the boldest and cleverest left nothing for the others.

"That is not fair," she told them; "each of you ought to take his proper turn."

But they never heeded; nobody ever does, when you talk of fairness and justice. She

tried every way to favour the weak and hearten the timid ; but she could make nothing of it, and do what she would, she fed the big fat birds at the expense of the thin ones. This made her sorry ; she was such a simple child she did not know it is the way of the world.

Crumb by crumb, the bread all went down the little singers' throats. And Fanchon went back very happy to her grandmother's house.



## III



WHEN night fell, her grandmother took the basket in which Fanchon had brought her a cake, filled it with apples and grapes, hung it on the child's arm, and said :

"Now, Fanchon, go straight back home, without stopping to play with the village ragamuffins. Be a good girl always. Good-bye."

Then she kissed her. But Fanchon stood thinking at the door.

"Grandmother?" she said.

"What is it, little Fanchon?"

"I should like to know," said Fanchon, "if there are any beautiful Princes among the birds that ate up my bread."

"Now that there are no more fairies," her grandmother told her, "the birds are all birds and nothing else."

"Good-bye, grandmother."

"Good-bye, Fanchon."

And Fanchon set off across the meadows for her home, the chimneys of which she could see smoking a long way off against the red sky of sunset.

On the road she met Antoine, the gardener's little boy. He asked her:

"Will you come and play with me, Fanchon?"

But she answered:

"I won't stop to play with you, because my grandmother told me not to. But I will give you an apple, because I love you very much."

Antoine took the apple and kissed the little girl.

They loved each other fondly.

He called her his little wife, and she called him her little husband.

As she went on her way, stepping soberly along like a staid, grown-up person, she heard behind her a merry twittering of birds, and turning round to look, she saw they were the same little pensioners she had fed when

they were hungry. They came flying after her.

“Good night, little friends,” she called to them, “good night! It’s bedtime now, so good night!”

And the winged songsters answered her with little cries that mean “God keep you!” in bird language.

So Fanchon came back to her mother’s to the sound of sweet music in the air.

## IV



FANCHON lay down in the dark in her little bed, which a carpenter in the village had made long ago of walnut-wood and carved a light railing alongside. The good old man had been resting years and years now under the shadow of the church, in a grass-grown bed; for Fanchon's cot had been her grandfather's when he was a little lad, and he had slept where she sleeps now. A curtain of pink-sprigged cotton protects her slumbers; she sleeps, and in her dreams she sees the Blue Bird flying to his sweetheart's Castle. She thinks he is as beautiful as a star, but she never expects him to come and light on her shoulder. She knows *she* is not a Princess, and no Prince changed into a blue bird will come to visit her. She tells herself that all birds are not Princes; that the birds

of her village are villagers, and that there might be one perhaps found amongst them, a little country lad changed into a sparrow by a bad fairy and wearing in his heart under his brown feathers the love of little Fanchon. Yes, if *he* came and she knew him, she would give him not bread crumbs only, but cake and kisses. She would so like to see him, and lo! she sees him; he comes and perches on her shoulder. He is a jack-sparrow, only a common sparrow. He has nothing rich or rare about him, but he looks alert and lively. To tell the truth, he is a little torn and tattered; he lacks a feather in his tail; he has lost it in battle — unless it was through some bad fairy of the village. Fanchon has her suspicions he is a naughty bird. But she is a girl, and she does not mind her jack-sparrow being a trifle headstrong, if only he has a kind heart. She pets him and calls him pretty names. Suddenly he begins to grow bigger; his body gets longer; his wings turn into two arms; he is a boy, and Fanchon knows who he is — Antoine, the gardener's little lad, who asks her:

“Shall we go and play together, shall we, Fanchon?”

She claps her hands for joy, and away she goes. . . . But suddenly she wakes and rubs her eyes. Her sparrow is gone, and so is Antoine! She is all alone in her little room. The dawn, peeping in between the flowered curtains, throws a white, innocent light over her cot. She can hear the birds singing in the garden. She jumps out of bed in her little nightgown and opens the window; she looks out into the garden, which is gay with flowers — roses, geraniums, and convolvulus — and spies her little pensioners, her little musicians, of yesterday. There they all sit in a row on the garden-fence, singing her a morning hymn to pay her for their crumbs of bread.

## THE FANCY-DRESS BALL



HERE we have little boys who are conquering heroes and little girls who are heroines. Here we have shepherdesses in hoops and wreaths of roses and shepherds in satin coats, who carry crooks tied with knots of riband. Oh! what white, pretty sheep they must be these shepherds tend! Here are Alexander the Great and Zaire, and Pyrrhus and Merope, Mahomet, Harlequin, Pierrot, Scapin, Blaise and Babette. They have come from all parts, from Greece and Rome and the lands of Faery, to dance together. What a fine thing a fancy ball is, and how delicious to be a great King for an hour or a famous Princess! There is nothing to spoil the pleasure. No need to act up to your costume, nor even to talk in character.

It would be poor fun, mind you, to wear heroes' clothes if you had to have a hero's heart as well. Heroes' hearts are torn with all sorts of sorrows. They are most of them famous for their calamities. If they had lived happy, we should never have heard of them. Merope had no wish to dance. Pyrrhus was cruelly slain by Orestes just when he was going to wed, and the innocent Zaire perished by the hand of her lover the Turk, philosophical Turk though he was. As for Blaise and Babette, the song says they suffer fond regrets that go on forever.

Why speak of Pierrot and Scapin? You know as well as I do they were scamps, and got their ears pulled more than once. No! glory costs too dear, even Harlequin's. On ~~the~~ contrary, it is very agreeable to be little boys and girls, and have the look of being great personages. That is why there is no pleasure to compare with a fancy ball, when the dresses are splendid enough. Only to wear them makes you feel brave. Then think how proud and pretty all your little friends are with their feathers and mantles;



how gallant and gay and noble they look, and how like the fine folks of olden times.

In the gallery, where you cannot see them, the musicians, with sad, gentle faces, are tuning up their fiddles. A stately quadrille lies open on their stands. They are going to attack the old-fashioned piece. At the first notes our heroes and masks will lead off the dance.

## THE SCHOOL



PROCLAIM Mademoiselle Genseigne's school the best girls' school in the world. I declare miscreants and slanderers any who shall think or say the contrary. Mademoiselle Genseigne's pupils are all well-behaved and industrious, and there is no pleasanter sight to see than all their small figures sitting so still, and all the heads in a straight row. They look like so many little bottles into which Mademoiselle Genseigne is busy pouring useful knowledge.

Mademoiselle Genseigne sits very upright at her high desk. She has a gentle, serious face; her neatly braided hair and her black tippet inspire respect and sympathy.

Mademoiselle Genseigne, who is very clever, is teaching her little pupils cyphering. She says to Rose Benoit:

"Rose Benoît, if I take four from twelve, what have I left?"

"Four?" answers Rose Benoît.

Mademoiselle Genseigne is not satisfied with the answer.

"And you, Emmeline Capel, if I take four from twelve, how much have I left?"

"Eight," Emmeline Capel answers.

"You hear, Rose Benoît, I have eight left," insists Mademoiselle Genseigne.

Rose Benoît falls into a brown study. Mademoiselle Genseigne has eight left, she is told, but she has no notion if it is eight hats or eight handkerchiefs, or possibly eight apples or eight feathers. The doubt has long tormented her. She can make nothing of arithmetic.

On the other hand, she is very wise in Scripture History. Mademoiselle Genseigne has not another pupil who can describe the Garden of Eden or Noah's Ark as Rose Benoît can. Rose Benoît knows every flower in the Garden and all the animals in the Ark. She knows as many fairy tales as Mademoiselle Genseigne herself. She knows

all the fables of the Fox and the Crow, the Donkey and the Little Dog, the Cock and the Hen, and what they said to each other. She is not at all surprised to hear that the animals used once to talk. The wonder would be if some one told her they don't talk now. She is quite sure she understands what her big dog Tom says and her little canary Chirp. She is quite right; animals have always talked, and they talk still; but they only talk to their friends. Rose Benoit loves them and they love her, and that is why she understands what they say. To understand each other there is nothing like loving one another.

To-day Rose Benoit has said her lessons without a mistake. She has won a good mark. • Emmeline Capel has a good mark, too, for knowing her arithmetic lesson so well.

On coming out of school, she told her mother she had a good mark. Then she asked her:

“A good mark, mother, what's the use of it?”

“A good mark is of no use,” Emmeline’s mother answered; “that is the very reason why we should be proud to get one. You will find out one day, my child, that the rewards most highly esteemed are just those that bring honour without profit.”

## MARIE



LITTLE girls long to pluck flowers and stars—it is their nature to. But stars will not be plucked, and the lesson they teach little girls is, that in this world there are longings that are never satisfied. Mademoiselle Marie has gone into the park, where she came upon a bed of hydrangeas; she saw how pretty the flowers were and that made her gather one. It was very difficult; she dragged with both hands, and very nearly tumbled over backwards when the stalk broke. She is pleased and proud at what she has done. But nurse has seen her. She runs up, snatches at Mademoiselle Marie's arm, scolds her, and sets her to stand and repent, not in the black closet, but at the foot of a great chestnut, under the shade of a huge Japanese umbrella.

There Mademoiselle Marie sits and thinks, in great surprise and perplexity. Her flower in one hand and the umbrella making a bright halo round her, she looks like a little idol from overseas.

Nurse has told her: "Marie, you must not put that flower in your mouth. If you do it when I tell you not, your little dog Toto will come and eat up your ears." And with these terrible words she walks away.

The young culprit, sitting quite still under her brilliant canopy, looks about her and gazes at earth and sky. It is a big world she sees, big enough and beautiful enough to amuse a little girl for some while. But her hydrangea blossom is more interesting than all the rest put together. She thinks to herself: "It is a flower; it must smell good?" And she puts her nose to the pretty pink and blue ball; she sniffs, but she cannot smell anything. She is not very good at scenting perfume; it is only a short while since she always used to blow at a rose instead of inhaling its odour. You must not laugh at her for that; one cannot learn everything at once.

Besides, if she had as keen a sense of smell as her mother, she would be no better off in this case. A hydrangea *has* no scent; that is why we get tired of it, for all its loveliness. But now Mademoiselle Marie begins to think: "Perhaps it's made of sugar, this flower." Then she opens her mouth very wide and is just going to lift the flower to her lips.

But suddenly, *yap!* goes her little dog. It is Toto, who comes bounding over a geranium bed and comes to a stand right in front of Mademoiselle Marie, with his ears cocked straight up, and stares hard at her out of his sharp little round eyes.



## THE PANDEAN PIPES



THREE children of the same village, Pierre, Jacques, and Jean, stand staring, side by side in a row, where they look for all the world like a mouth-organ or Pandean Pipes, only with three pipes instead of seven. Pierre, to the left, is a tall lad, Jean, to the right, is a short child; Jacques, who is betwixt the two, may call himself tall or short, according as he looks at his left-hand or his right-hand neighbour. It is a situation I would beg you to ponder, for it is your own, and mine, and everybody else's. Each one of us is just like Jacques, and deems himself great or small according as his neighbours' inches are many or few.

That is the reason why it is true to say that Jacques is neither tall nor short, and why it is also true to say he is tall *and* he is short. He

is what God chooses him to be. For us, he is the middle reed of our living Pandean Pipes.

But what is he doing, and what are his two comrades doing? They are staring, staring hard, all three. What at? At something that has disappeared in the distance, something that has vanished out of sight; yet they can see it still, and their eyes are dazzled with its splendours. It makes little Jean clean forget his eel-skin whiplash and the peg-top he has always been so fond of keeping for ever spinning with it in the dusty roads. Pierre and Jacques stand stolidly, their hands behind their backs.

What is the wonderful sight that has bewildered all three? A pedlar's cart, a hand-cart; they had seen it stop in the village street.

Then the pedlar drew back his oil-cloth covering, and all, men, women, and children, feasted their eyes on knives, scissors, pop-guns, jumping Jacks, wooden soldiers and lead soldiers, bottles of scent, cakes of soap, coloured pictures, and a thousand other splen-

did objects. The servant-wenches from the farm and the mill turned pale with longing; Pierre and Jacques flushed red with delight. Little Jean put out his tongue at it all. Everything the barrow held seemed to them rich and rare. But what they coveted most of all were those mysterious articles whose meaning and use they could make nothing of. For instance, there were polished globes like mirrors that reflected their faces with the features ludicrously distorted. There were Epinal wares with figures in impossibly vivid colours; there were little cases and boxes with nobody knows what inside.

The women made purchases of muslins and laces by the yard, and the pedlar rolled the black oil-cloth cover back again over the treasures of his barrow. Then, pulling at the collar, he hauled off his load after him along the highroad. And now barrow and barrow-man have disappeared below the horizon.

## ROGER'S STUD



It is a great anxiety keeping a stud. The horse is a delicate animal and needs a lot of looking after. Just ask Roger if it does n't!

He is busy now grooming his noble chestnut, which would be the pearl of wooden horses, the flower of the Black Forest stud-farms, if only he had not lost half his tail in battle. Roger would so like to know whether wooden horses' tails grow again.

After rubbing them down in fancy, Roger gives his horses an imaginary feed of oats. That is the proper way to feed these elfin creatures of wood on whose backs little boys gallop through the land of dreams.

Now Roger is off for his ride, mounted on his mettled charger. The poor beast has no ears left and his mane is all notched like an

old broken comb; but Roger loves him. Why it would be hard to say! This bay was the gift of a poor man; and the presents of the poor are somehow sweeter perhaps than any others.

Roger is off. He has ridden far. The flowers of the carpet are the blossoms of the tropical forest. Good luck to you, little Roger! May your hobby-horse carry you happily through the world! May you never have a more dangerous mount! Small and great, we all ride ours! Which of us has not his hobby?

Men's hobbies gallop like mad things along the roads of life; one is chasing glory, another pleasure; many leap over precipices and break their rider's neck. I wish you luck, little Roger, and I hope, when you are a man, you will bestride two hobbies that will always carry you along the right road; one is spirited, the other gentle-tempered; they are both noble steeds; one is called Courage and the other Kindness.

## COURAGE



LOUISON and Frédéric are off to school along the village street. The sun shines gaily and the two children are singing. They sing like the nightingale, because their hearts are light like his. They sing an old song their grandmothers sang when they were little girls, a song their children's children will sing one day; for songs are tender flowers that never die, they fly from lip to lip down the ages. The lips fade and fall silent one after the other, but the song lives on for ever. \* There are songs come down to us from the days when the men were shepherds and all the women shepherdesses. That is the reason why they speak of nothing but sheep and wolves.

Louison and Frédéric sing; their mouths are as round as a flower and the song rises shrill and thin and clear in the morning air.

But listen! suddenly the notes stick in Frédéric's throat.

What unseen power is it has strangled the music on the boy's lips? It is fear. Every day, as sure as fate, he comes upon the butcher's dog at the end of the village street, and every day his heart seems to stop and his legs begin to shake at the sight. Yet the butcher's dog does not fly at him, or even threaten to. He sits peaceably at his master's shop-door. But he is black, and he has a staring bloodshot eye and shows a row of sharp white teeth. He looks frightful. And then he squats there in the middle of bits of meat and offal and all sorts of horrors—which makes him more terrifying still. Of course it is n't his fault, but he is the presiding genius. Yes, a savage brute, the butcher's dog! So, the instant Frédéric catches sight of the beast before the shop, he picks up a big stone, as he sees grown-up men do to keep off bad-tempered curs, and he slinks past close, close under the opposite wall.

That is how he behaved this time; and Louison laughed at him.

She did not make any of those daredevil speeches one generally caps with others more reckless still. No, she never said a word; she never stopped singing. But she altered her voice and began singing on such a mocking note that Frédéric reddened to his very ears. Then his little head began to buzz with many thoughts. He learned that we must dread shame even more than danger. And he was afraid of being afraid.

So, when school was over and he saw the butcher's dog, he marched undauntedly past the astonished animal.

History adds that he kept a corner of his eye on Louison to see if she was looking. It is a true saying that, if there were no dames nor damsels in the world, men would be less courageous.



## CATHERINE'S "AT HOME"



IT is five o'clock. Mademoiselle Catherine is "at home" to her dolls. It is her "day." The dolls do not talk; the little Genie that gave them their smile did not vouchsafe the gift of speech. He refused it for the general good; if dolls could talk, we should hear nobody but them. Still there is no lack of conversation. Mademoiselle Catherine talks for her guests as well as for herself; she asks questions and gives the answers.

"How do you do?—Very well, thank you. I broke my arm yesterday morning going to buy cakes. But it's quite well now.—Ah! so much the better.—And how is your little girl?—She has the whooping-cough.—Ah! what a pity! Does she cough much?—Oh! no, it's a whoop-

ing-cough where there's no cough. You know I had two more children last week. — Really? that makes four doesn't it? — Four or five, I've forgotten which. When you have so many, you get confused. — What a pretty frock you have. — Oh! I've got far prettier ones still at home. — Do you go to the theatre? — Yes, every evening. I was at the Opera yesterday; but Polichinelle was n't playing, because the wolf had eaten him. — I go to dances every day, my dear. — It is so amusing. — Yes, I wear a blue gown and dance with the young men, Generals, Princes, Confectioners, all the most distinguished people. — You look as pretty as an angel to-day, my dear. — Oh! it's the spring. — Yes, but what a pity it's snowing. — *I* love the snow, because it's white. — Oh! there's black snow, you know. — Yes, but that's the bad snow."

There's fine conversation for you; Mademoiselle Catherine's tongue goes nineteen to the dozen. Still I have one fault to find with her; she talks all the time to the same visitor, who is pretty and wears a fine frock.

There she is wrong. A good hostess is equally gracious to all her guests. She treats them all with affability, and if she shows any particular preference, it is to the more retiring and the less prosperous. We should flatter the unhappy; it is the only flattery allowable. But Catherine has discovered this for herself. She has guessed the secret of true politeness: a kind heart is everything. She pours out tea for the company, and forgets nobody. On the contrary, she presses the dolls that are poor and unhappy and shy to help themselves to invisible cakes and sandwiches made of dominoes.

Some day Catherine will hold a salon where the old French courtesy will live again.

## LITTLE SEA-DOGS



THEY are sailor boys, regular little sea-dogs. Look at them; they have their caps pulled down over their ears so that the gale blowing in from the sea and bringing the spindrift with it may not deafen them with its dreadful howling. They wear heavy woollen clothes to keep out the cold and wet. Their patched pea-jacket and breeches have been their elders' before them. Most of their garments have been contrived out of old things of their father's. Their soul is likewise of the same stuff as their father's; it is simple, brave, and long-suffering. At birth they inherited a single-hearted, noble temper. Who and what gave it them? After God and their parents, the Sea. The Sea teaches sailors courage by teaching them to face danger. It is a rough but kindly instructor.

That is why our little sailor-boys, though their hearts are childlike still, have the spirit of gallant veterans. Elbows on the parapet of the sea-wall, they gaze out into the offing. It is more than the blue line marking the faint division between sea and sky that they see. Their eyes care little for the soft, changing colours of the ocean or the vast, contorted masses of the clouds. What they see, as they look seawards, is something more moving than the hue of the waves or the shape of the clouds; it is a suggestion of human love. They are spying for the boats that sailed away for the fishing; presently they will loom again on the horizon, laden with shrimp to the gunwales, and bringing home uncles and big brothers and fathers. The little fleet will soon appear yonder betwixt the ocean and God's sky with its white or brown sails. To-day the sky is unclouded, the sea calm; the flood tide floats the fishers gently to the shore. But the Ocean is a capricious old fellow, who takes all shapes and sings in many voices. To-day he laughs; to-morrow he will be growling in the night under his

beard of foam. He shipwrecks the most handy boats, though they have been blessed by the Priest to the chanting of the *Te Deum*; he drowns the most skilful master mariners, and it is all his fault you see in the village, before the cottage doors where the nets hang to dry beside the fish-creels, so many women wearing black widow's weeds.

## GETTING WELL



GERMAINE is ill. Nobody knows how it began. The arm which sows fever is invisible like the dustman's hand, the old fellow who comes every night and makes the little ones so sleepy. But Germaine was not ill very long and she was not very bad, and now she is getting well again. This getting well is even pleasanter than being quite well, which comes next. In the same way hoping and wishing are better, very often, than anything we wish for or hope for. Germaine lies in bed in her pretty, bright room, and her dreams are as bright-coloured as her room.

She looks, a little languidly still, at her doll, which sleeps beside her own bed. There are sympathies that go deep between little girls and their dolls. Germaine's doll

fell ill at the same time as her little mamma, and now she is getting well with her. She will take her first carriage outing sitting by Germaine's side.

She has seen the doctor too. Alfred came to feel the doll's pulse. He is Doctor "As-bad-as-can-be." He talks of nothing but cutting off arms and legs. But Germaine asked him so earnestly that he agreed to cure her dolly without slashing it to pieces. But he prescribed the nastiest medicines.

Illness has one advantage at any rate; it makes us know our friends. Germaine is sure now she can count on Alfred's goodness; she is certain Lucie is the best of sisters. All the nine days her illness lasted, Lucie came to learn her lessons and do her sewing in the sick room. She insists on bringing the little patient her herb-tea herself. And it is not a bitter potion, such as Alfred ordered; no, it is balmy with the scent of wild flowers.

When she smells its perfume, Germaine's thoughts fly to the flowery mountain paths, the haunt of children and bees, where she



played so often last year. Alfred too remembers the beautiful ways, and the woods, and the springs, and the mules that climbed up and up on the brink of precipices with a sound of tinkling bells.

## ACROSS THE MEADOWS



AFTER breakfast Catherine started off to the meadows with her little brother Jean. When they set out, the day seemed as young and fresh as they were. The sky was not altogether blue; it was grey rather, but of a tenderer grey than any blue. Catherine's eyes are just the same grey, as if made out of a bit of morning sky.

Catherine and Jean wander all by themselves through the fields. Their mother is a farmer's wife and is at work at home. They have no nurse-maid to take them, and they don't need one. They know their way, and all the woods and fields and hills. Catherine can tell the time by looking at the sun, and she has guessed all sorts of pretty secrets of Nature that town-bred children have no suspicion of. Little Jean himself understands

a great many things about the woods, the pools, and the mountains, for his little soul is a country soul.

Catherine and Jean go roaming through the flowery meadows. As they go, Catherine gathers a nosegay. She picks blue centauries, scarlet poppies, cuckoo-flowers, and buttercups, which she also knows as *little chicks*. She picks those pretty purple blossoms that grow in hedgerows and are called Venus' looking-glasses. She picks the dark ears of the milkwort, and crane's-bill and lily of the valley, whose tiny white bells shed a delicious perfume at the least puff of wind. Catherine loves flowers because they are beautiful; and she loves them too because they make such pretty ornaments. She is very simply dressed, and her pretty hair is hid under a brown linen cap. She wears a cotton check pinafore over her plain frock, and goes in wooden shoes. She has never seen rich dresses except on the Virgin Mary and the St. Catherine in the parish church. But there are some things little girls know directly they are born. Catherine knows

that flowers are becoming to wear, and that pretty ladies who pin nosegays in their bosoms look lovelier than ever. So she has a notion she must be very fine indeed now, carrying a nosegay bigger than her own head. Her thoughts are as bright and fragrant as her flowers. They are thoughts that cannot be put into words; there are no words pretty enough. It wants song tunes for that, the liveliest and softest airs, the sweetest songs. So Catherine sings, as she gathers her nosegay: "Away to the woods alone" and "My heart is for him, my heart is for him."

Little Jean is of another temper. He follows another line of ideas. He is a broth of a boy, he is; Jean is not breeched yet, but his spirit is beyond his years and there's no more pollicking blade than he. While he grips his sister's pinafore with one hand, for fear of tumbling, he shakes his whip in the other like a sturdy lad. His father's head stableman can hardly crack his any better when he meets his sweetheart, bringing home the horses from watering at the river. Little Jean is lulled by no soft reveries. He never

heeds the field flowers. The games he dreams of are stiff jobs of work. His thoughts dwell on wagons stogged in the mire and big cart-horses hauling at the collar at his voice and under his lash.

Catherine and Jean have climbed above the meadows, up the hill, to a high ground from which you can make out all the chimneys of the village dotted among the trees and in the far distance the steeples of six parishes. Then you see what a big place the world is. Then Catherine can better understand the stories she has been taught, — the dove from the Ark, the Israelites in the Promised Land, and Jesus going from city to city.

“Let’s sit down there,” she says.

Down she sits, and, opening her hands, she sheds her flowery harvest all over her. She is all fragrant with blossoms, and in a moment the butterflies come fluttering round her. She picks and chooses and matches her flowers; she weaves them into garlands and wreaths, and hangs flower-bells in her ears; she is decked out now like the rustic image

of a Holy Virgin the shepherds venerate. Her little brother Jean, who has been busy all this while driving a team of imaginary horses, sees her in all this bravery. Instantly he is filled with admiration. A religious awe penetrates all his childish soul. He stops, and the whip falls from his fingers. He feels that she is beautiful and all smothered in lovely flowers. He tries in vain to say all this in his soft, indistinct speech. But she has guessed. Little Catherine is his big sister, and a big sister is a little mother; she foresees, she guesses; she has the sacred instinct.

"Yes, darling," cries Catherine, "I am going to make you a beautiful wreath, and you will look like a little king."

And so she twines together the white flowers, the yellow flowers, and the red flowers, into a chaplet. She puts it on little Jean's head, and he flushes with pride and pleasure. She kisses her little brother, lifts him in her arms and plants him, all garlanded with blossoms, on a big stone. Then she looks at him admiringly, because he is beautiful and *she* has made him so.

And standing there on his rustic pedestal, little Jean knows he is beautiful, and the thought fills him with a deep respect for himself. He feels he is something holy. Very upright and still, with round eyes and tight-drawn lips, arms by his side with the palms open and the fingers parted like the spokes of a wheel, he tastes a pious joy to be an idol — he is sure he is an idol now. The sky is overhead, the woods and fields lie at his feet. He is the hub of the universe. He alone is great, he alone is beautiful.

But suddenly Catherine breaks into a laugh. She shouts:

“Oh! how funny you look, little Jean! how funny you do look!”

She runs up and throws her arms round him, she kisses him and shakes him; the heavy wreath of flowers slips down over his nose. And she laughs again:

“Oh! how funny he looks! how very funny!”

But it is no laughing matter for little Jean. He is sad and sorry, wondering why it is all over and he has left off being beautiful. It hurts to come down to earth again!

Now the wreath is unwound and tossed on the grass, and little Jean is like anybody else once more. Yes, he has left off being beautiful. But he is still a sturdy young scamp. He soon has his whip in hand again and now he is hauling his team of six, the six big cart-horses of his dreams, out of that rut. Catherine is still playing with her flowers. But some of them are dying. Others are closing in sleep. For the flowers go to sleep like the animals, and look! the campanulas, plucked a few hours ago, are shutting their purple bells and sinking asleep in the little hands that have parted them from life.

A light breeze blows by, and Catherine shivers. It is night coming.

"I am hungry," says little Jean.

But Catherine has not a bit of bread to give her little brother. She says:

"Little brother, let's go back to the house."

And they both think of the cabbage soup steaming in the pot that hangs from the hook right under the great chimney. Catherine gathers her flowers in her arm and taking her



little brother by the hand, she leads him homewards.

The sun sank slowly down to the ruddy West. The swallows swooped past the two children, almost touching them with their wings, that hardly seemed to move. It was getting dark. Catherine and Jean pressed closer together.

Catherine dropped her flowers one after the other by the way. They could hear, in the wide silence, the untiring chirp-chirp of the crickets. They were afraid, both of them, and they were sad; the melancholy of nightfall had entered into their little hearts. All round them was familiar ground, but the things they knew the best looked strange and uncanny. The earth seemed suddenly to have grown too big and too old for them. They were tired, and they began to think they would never reach the house, where mother was making the soup for all the family. Jean's whip hung limp and still, and Catherine let the last of her flowers slip from her tired fingers. She was dragging Jean along by the arm, and neither said a word.

At last they saw a long way off the roof of their house and smoke rising in the darkening sky. Then they stopped running, and clapping their hands together, shouted for joy. Catherine kissed her little brother; then they set off running again as fast as ever their weary legs would carry them. When they reached the village, there were women coming back from the fields who gave them good evening. They breathed again. Their mother was on the door-step, in a white cap, soup-ladle in hand.

“Come along, little ones, come along!” she called to them. And they threw themselves into her arms. When she reached the parlour where the cabbage soup was smoking on the table, Catherine shivered again. She had seen night come down over the earth. Jean, seated on the settle, his chin on a level with the table, was already eating his soup.

## THE MARCH PAST



RENÉ, Bernard, Roger, Jacques, and Étienne feel sure there is nothing finer in the world than to be a soldier. Francine agrees with them and she would love to be a boy to join the army. They think so because soldiers wear fine uniforms, epaulettes and gold lace, and glittering swords. There is yet another reason for putting the soldier in the front rank of citizens — because he gives his life for his Country. There is no true greatness in this world but that of sacrifice, and to offer one's life is the greatest of all sacrifices, because it includes all others. That is why the hearts of the crowd beat high when a regiment goes by.

René is the General. He wears a cocked hat and rides a war-horse. The hat is made of paper and the horse is a chair. His army

consists of a drummer and four men — of whom one is a girl! “Shoulder arms! Forward, march!” and the march past begins. Francine and Roger look quite imposing under arms. True, Jacques does not hold his gun very valiantly. He is a melancholy lad. But we must not blame him for that; dreamers can be just as brave as those who never dream at all. His little brother Étienne, the tiniest mite in the regiment, looks pensive. He is ambitious; he would like to be a general officer right away, and that makes him sad.

“Forward! forward!” René shouts the order. “We are to fall on the Chinese, who are in the dining-room.” The Chinese are chairs. When you play at fighting, chairs make first-rate Chinese. They fall — and what better can the Chinese do? When all the chairs are feet in air, René announces: “Soldiers, now we have beaten the Chinese, we will have our rations.” The idea is well received on all hands. Yes, soldiers must eat. This time the Commissariat has furnished the best of victuals — buns, maids of honour,

coffee cakes and chocolate cakes, red-currant syrup. The army falls to with a will. Only Étienne will eat nothing. He frowns and looks enviously at the sword and cocked hat which the General has left on a chair. He creeps up, snatches them, and slips into the next room. There he stands alone before the glass; he puts on the cocked hat and waves the sword; he is a general, a general without an army, a general all to himself. He tastes the pleasures of ambition — pleasures full of vague forecastings and long, long hopes.

## DEAD LEAVES



UTUMN is here. The wind blowing through the woods whirls about the dead leaves. The chestnuts are stripped bare already and lift their black skeleton arms in the air. And now the beeches and hornbeams are shedding *their* leaves. The birches and aspens are turned to trees of gold, and only the great oak keeps his coronal of green.

The morning is fresh; a keen wind is chasing the clouds across a grey sky and reddening the youngsters' fingers. Pierre, Babet, and Jeannot are off to collect the dead leaves, the leaves that once, when they were still alive, were full of dew and songs of birds, and which now strew the ground in thousands and thousands with their little shrivelled corpses. They are dead, but they smell good. They

will make a fine litter for Riquette, the goat and Roussette, the cow. Pierre has taken his big basket; he is quite a little man. Babet has her sack; she is quite a little woman. Jeannot comes last trundling the wheelbarrow.

Down the hill they go at a run. At the edge of the wood they find the other village children, who are come too to lay in a store of dead leaves for the winter. It is not play, this; it is work.

But never think the children are sad, because they are at work. Work is serious, yes; it is not sad. Very often the little ones mimic it in fun, and children's games, most times, are copies of their elders' workaday doings.

Now they are hard at it. The boys do their part in silence. They are peasant lads, and will soon be men, and peasants do not talk much. But it is different with the little peasant girls; *their* tongues go at a fine pace, as they fill the baskets and bags.

But now the sun is climbing higher and warming the country pleasantly. From the cottage roofs rise light puffs of smoke. The

children know what that means. The smoke tells them the pease-soup is cooking in the pot. One more armful of dead leaves, and the little workers will take the road home. It is a stiff climb. Bending under sacks or toiling behind barrows, they soon get hot, and the sweat comes out in beads. Pierre, Babet and Jeannot stop to take breath.

But the thought of the pease-soup keeps up their courage. Puffing and blowing, they reach home at last. Their mother is waiting for them on the door-step and calls out: "Come along, children, the soup is ready."

Our little friends find this capital. There's no soup so good as what you have worked for.



## SUZANNE



THE Louvre, as you know, is a museum where beautiful things and ancient things are kept safe — and this is wisely done, for old age and beauty are both alike venerable. Among the most touching of the antiquities treasured in the Louvre Museum is a fragment of marble, worn and cracked in many places, but on which can still be clearly made out two maidens holding each a flower in her hand. Both are beautiful figures; they were young when Greece was young. They say it was the age of perfect beauty. The sculptor who has left us their image represents them in profile, offering each other one of those lotus flowers that were deemed sacred. In the blue cups of their blossoms the world quaffed oblivion of the ills of life. Our men of learning have given much thought

to these two maidens. They have turned over many books to find out about them, big books, bound some in parchment, others in vellum, and many in pig-skin; but they have never fathomed the reason why the two beautiful maidens hold up a flower in their hands.

What they could not discover after so much labour and thought, so many arduous days and sleepless nights, Mademoiselle Suzanne knew in a moment.

Her papa had taken her to the Louvre, where he had business. Mademoiselle Suzanne looked wonderingly at the antiques, and seeing gods with missing arms and legs and heads, she said to herself: "Ah! yes, these are the grown-up gentlemen's dolls; I see now gentlemen break their dollies the same as little girls' do." But when she came to the two maidens who, each of them, hold a flower, she threw them a kiss, because they looked so charming. Then her father asked her:

"Why do they give each other a flower?"

And Suzanne answered at once:

"To wish each other a happy birthday."

Then, after thinking a moment, she added:

“They have the same birthday; they are both alike and they are offering each other the same flower. Girl friends should always have the same birthday.”

Now Suzanne is far away from the Louvre and the old Greek marbles; she is in the kingdom of the birds and the flowers. She is spending the bright spring days in the meadows under shelter of the woods. She plays in the grass, and that is the sweetest sort of play. She remembers to-day is her little friend Jacqueline's birthday; and so she is going to pick flowers which she will give Jacqueline, and kiss her.

## FISHING



JEAN set out betimes in the morning with his sister Jeanne, a fishing-pole over his shoulder and a basket on his arm. It is holiday time and the school is shut; that is why Jean goes off every day with his sister Jeanne, a rod over his shoulder and a basket on his arm, along the river bank. Jean is a Tourainer, and Jeanne a lass of Touraine. The river is Tourainer too. It runs crystal-clear between silvery sallows under a moist, mild sky. Morning and evening white mists trail over the grass of the water-meadows. But Jean and Jeanne love the river neither for the greenery of its banks nor its clear waters that mirror the heavens. They love it for the fish in it. They stop presently at the most likely place, and Jeanne sits down under a pollard willow. Laying down his

baskets, Jean unwinds his tackle. This is very primitive—a switch, with a piece of thread and a bent pin at the end of it. Jean supplied the rod, Jeanne gave the line and the hook; so the tackle is the common property of brother and sister. Both want it all to themselves, and this simple contrivance, only meant to do mischief to the fishes, becomes the cause of domestic broils and a rain of blows by the peaceful riverside. Brother and sister fight for the free use of the rod and line. Jean's arm is black and blue with pinches and Jeanne's cheek scarlet from her brother's slaps. At last, when they were tired of pinching and hitting, Jean and Jeanne consented to share amicably what neither could appropriate by force. They agreed that the rod should pass alternately from the brother's hands to the sister's after each fish they caught.

Jean begins. But there's no knowing when he will end. He does not break the treaty openly, but he shirks its consequences by a mean trick. Rather than have to hand over the tackle to his sister, he refuses to catch the

fish that come, when they nibble the bait and set his float bobbing.

Jean is artful; Jeanne is patient. She has been waiting six hours. But at last she seems tired of doing nothing. She yawns, stretches, lies down in the shade of the willow, and shuts her eyes. Jean spies her out of one corner of his, and he thinks she is asleep. The float dives. He whips out the line, at the end of which gleams a flash of silver. A gudgeon has taken the pin.

“Ah! it’s my turn now,” cries a voice behind him.

And Jeanne snatches the rod.

## THE PENALTIES OF GREAT- NESS



It was to go and see their friend Jean that Roger, Marcel, Bernard, Jacques, and Étienne set out along the broad highroad that winds like a handsome yellow riband through the fields and meadows.

Now they are off. They start all abreast; it is the best way. Only there is one defect in the arrangement this time; Étienne is too little to keep up.

He tries hard and puts his best foot<sup>4</sup>foremost. His short legs stretch their widest. He swings his arms into the bargain. But he is too little; he cannot go as fast as his companions. He falls behind because he is too small; it is no use.

The big boys, who are older, should surely wait for him, you say, and suit their pace to

his. So they should, but they don't. Forward! cry the strong ones of this world, and they leave the weaklings in the lurch. But hear the end of the story. All of a sudden our four tall, strong, sturdy friends see something jumping on the ground. It jumps because it is a frog, and it wants to reach the meadow along the roadside. The meadow is froggy's home, and he loves it; he has his residence there beside a brook. He jumps, and jumps.

He is a green frog, and he looks like a leaf that is alive. Now the lads are in the meadow; very soon they feel their feet sinking in the soft ground where the rank grass grows. A few steps more, and they are up to their knees in mud. The grass hid a swamp underneath.

They just manage to struggle out. Shoes, socks, calves are all as black as ink. The fairy of the green field has put gaiters of mire on the four bad boys.

Étienne comes up panting for breath. He hardly knows, when he sees them in this pickle, if he should be glad or sorry. His



simple little heart is filled with a sense of the catastrophes that befall the great and strong. As for the four muddy urchins, they turn back piteously the way they came, for how can they, I should like to know, how can they go and see their friend Jean with their shoes and stockings in this state? When they get home again, their mothers will know how naughty they have been by the evidence their legs, while little Étienne's innocence will be legible on his sturdy little stumps.

## A CHILD'S DINNER PARTY



HAT fun it is playing at dinner parties! You can have a very plain dinner or a very elaborate one, just as you like. You can manage it with nothing at all.

Only you have to pretend a great deal then.

Thérèse and her little sister Pauline have invited Pierre and Marthe to a dinner in the country. Proper invitations have been issued, and they have been talking about it for days. Mamma has given her two little girls good advice—and good things to eat, too. There will be nougat and sweet cakes, and a chocolate cream. The table will be laid in the parlour.

“If only it will be fine!” cries Thérèse, who is nine now. At her age one knows the fondest hopes are often disappointed in this world and you cannot always do what you

propose. But little Pauline has none of these worries. She cannot think it will be wet. It will be fine, because she wants it to.

And lo! the great day has broken clear and sunny. Not a cloud in the sky. The two guests have come. How fortunate! For this was another subject of anxiety for Thérèse. Marthe had caught a cold, and perhaps she would not be better in time. As for little Pierre, everybody knows he always misses the train. You cannot blame him for it. It is his misfortune, not his fault. His mother is unpunctual by nature. Everywhere and always little Pierre arrives after everybody else; he has never in his life seen the beginning of anything. This has given him a dull, resigned look.

The dinner is served; ladies and gentlemen, take your places! Thérèse presides. She is thoughtful and serious; the housewifely instinct is awaking in her bosom. Pierre carves valiantly. Nose in the dish and elbows above his head, he struggles to divide the leg of a chicken. Why, his feet even take their part in the tremendous effort. Mademoiselle

Marthe eats elegantly, without any ado or any noise, just like a grown-up lady. Pauline is not so particular ; she eats how she can and as much as she can.

Thérèse, now serving her guests, now one of them herself, is content ; and contentment is better than joy. The little dog Gyp has come to eat up the scraps, and Thérèse thinks, as she watches him crunching the bones, that dogs know nothing of all the dainty ways that make grown-up dinners, and children's too, so refined and delightful.

sails of the windmills to go round. He is proud of himself. He glories in his work, as true artists do, — as God did.

But he has forgotten the kitten playing on the floor beside him with a ball of thread. The moment Michel leaves the room, the little animal will jump up on the table and with a knock of its white paw upset the ink-pot over the papers. Thus will perish Michel's masterpiece. The artist will be down-hearted at first. But soon he will produce another masterpiece to make good the wrong done him by the kitten and cruel fate. So talent rises victorious over ill fortune.

## JACQUELINE AND MIRAUT



JACQUELINE and Miraut are old friends. Jacqueline is a little girl, and Miraut is a big dog. They are of the same world, they are both country bred; hence their profound sympathy. How long have they known each other? They cannot tell; it goes beyond a dog's memory and beyond a little girl's. Besides, they don't need to know; they have no wish and no need to know anything. All the idea they have is that they have been friends for a very long time, since the beginning of things; for they cannot conceive, either of them, that the universe existed before their time. The world, as they imagine it, is young, simple, and artless as themselves. Jacqueline sees Miraut and Miraut sees Jacqueline right in the middle of it.

Miraut is far bigger and stronger than Jacqueline. When he puts his fore-paws on the child's shoulders, he towers a whole head and

chest above her. He could eat her up in three mouthfuls; but he knows, he feels a virtue is in her, and that, small as she is, she is precious. He admires, he loves her. He licks her face out of pure affection. Jacqueline loves him because he is strong and kind. She has a great respect for him. She notices that he knows many secrets she does not, and that the mysterious genius of the earth is in him. She reveres him as men in olden days, under another 'sky, revered rustic, hairy gods of the woods and fields.

But one day she has a strange surprise that alarms, amazes her; she sees her venerated divinity, her genius of the earth, her hairy god, Miraut, tied by a long leash to a tree, beside the well. She gazes and wonders. Miraut looks at her 'out of his honest, patient eyes. Not knowing he is a divinity, a shaggy god, he wears his chain and collar without resentment. But Jacqueline hesitates, she dares not go nearer. She cannot understand her divine and mysterious friend being a prisoner, and a vague sadness fills her childish soul.

